

NOVEMBER 1998

PRICE: HK\$38

CHINA TOURISM

CHINA TOURISM

**NEW CIRCULAR ROUTE
TO JIUZHAI GOU
SPECIALITIES OF CHAOZHOU:
TEA, SNACKS AND CERAMICS
CHASING THE AUTUMN COLOURS
SEEKING A DREAM ON
THE SOUTHWESTERN HIGHLAND**

220

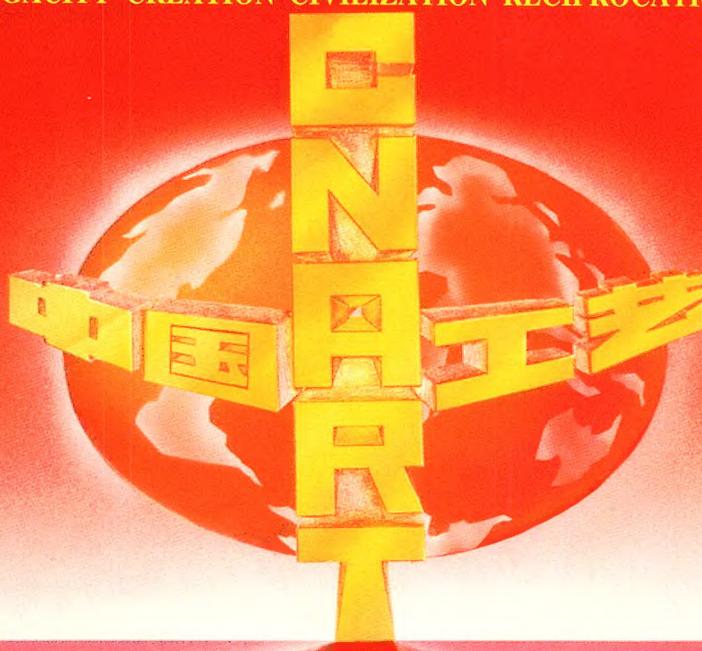
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CHINA NATIONAL ARTS & CRAFTS IMP. & EXP. CORP.

SAGACITY CREATION CIVILIZATION RECIPROCATION



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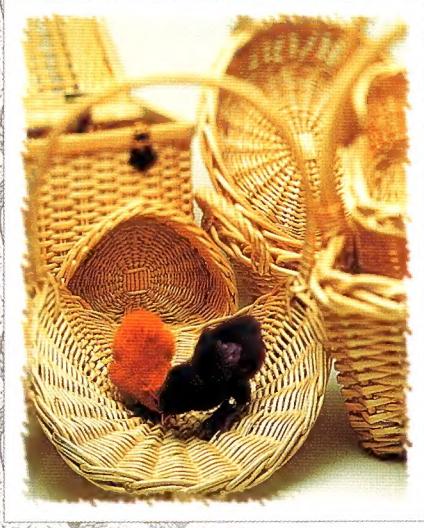
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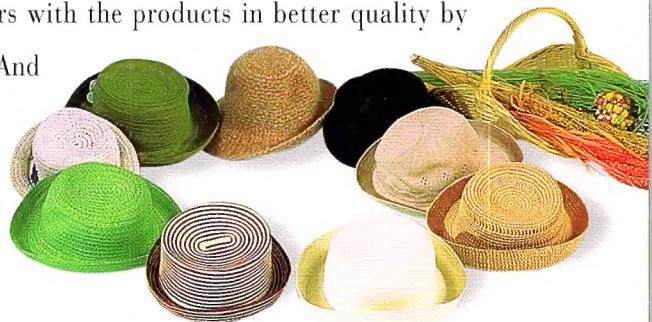
With more than 40 years of steady development Shandong Arts & Crafts has established one integral group of enterprises engaged in business trade, manufacturing, processing, storage, forwarding, container transportation, real estate, commerce and service respectively. Furthermore Shandong

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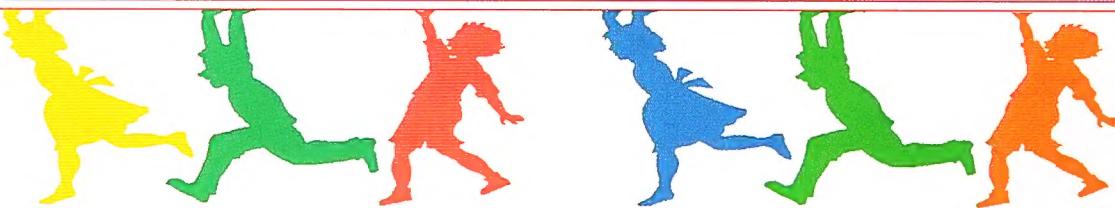
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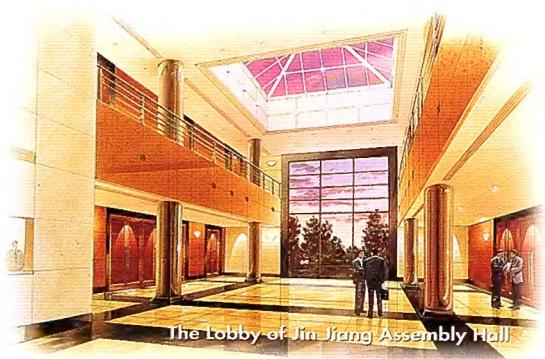




The Jin Jiang Assembly Hall

Jin Jiang Hotel, situated in Maoming Road in the city centre of Shanghai, is a leading hotel in this renowned metropolis. The hotel is designed and built like a garden, and one-third of its 30,000-square-metre area is covered with vegetation. It has hosted more than 300 heads of state from more than 100 countries, as well as many important figures in the world. Its excellent service is highly appreciated by guests both from home and abroad.

The unique layout of the hotel gains it credit: the three blocks of European-style towers of the hotel, together with the two landscaped gardens, present a sense of harmony.



The Lobby of Jin Jiang Assembly Hall

The hotel features 515 guest rooms, including the exquisitely decorated presidential suites, deluxe suites and standard rooms, which are not only modern and spacious, but also comfortable.

Jin Jiang hotel has provided catering services since the 1930s. Over the more than 50 years, many experienced chefs have served here. They have, from time to time, been invited by the United States, Singapore and Hong Kong for performance and experience exchanges. The hotel's restaurants, concentrated mainly in the North Building, serve a whole range of cuisine.

The recently renovated Jin Jiang Guest Tower features 28 well-furnished rooms combining both modern and traditional European design, making the hotel top the list of its class in Shanghai. The building's 72 detached apartments enjoy a quiet and comfortable environment, which makes you feel at home.

The Jin Jiang Assembly Hall, where the historic Sino-US Joint Communiqué was signed when Nixon visited China in 1972, re-opened in September after renovation. The European-style outlook of the building converts it into one of the most popular scenic spots inside the Jin Jiang Garden. The new Jin Jiang Assembly Hall is equipped with function halls, banquet halls and conference rooms, all installed with hi-tech facilities, which makes it an ideal international conference centre. Besides, the hall is also complemented with a fitness room, sauna, bowling alleys, swimming pool and car park.

The well-equipped Jin Jiang Hotel is not only a luxurious hotel, but a business centre and a shopping arcade. Jin Jiang Hotel — your ideal business stopover in Shanghai.



上海市锦江(集团)公司
SHANGHAI JIN JIANG (GROUP) CO.



The North Building of the Jin Jiang Hotel

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Photos by Wang Jianjun, Huang Yanhong

Article by Huang Yanhong

The charming scenery of Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan, with more than 100 lakes and ponds imbedded in verdant mountains, is an irresistible attraction. On a new circular road from Chengdu to Jiuzhaigou, you can see more scenic spots and historical sites.

32 A Learning Tour in Chaozhou: Gongfu Tea, Snacks and Ceramics

Photos & article by Shi Baoxiu

Among all the specialities of Chaozhou, gongfu tea, snacks and ceramics are the most representative. Visiting this ancient city in Guangdong, you may not only taste or enjoy, but also learn how to make these local products.

44 Where to Go in Multi-hued Autumn

Photos by Shan Xiaogang

Recapturing Autumn in the North

Photos & article by Lee Lai Chu, Lin Shuk Ying

It may be too late to chase autumn in China this year. From the introductions made here, however, you will learn about the best places on the vast Chinese land offering brilliant autumn scenes, which may aid your future travel plans at this time of year.

50 Pingyao: Remnant of a Bygone Century

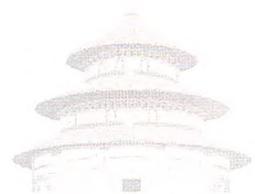
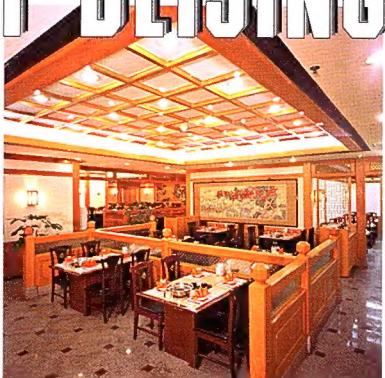
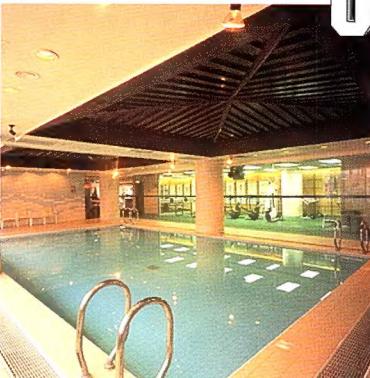
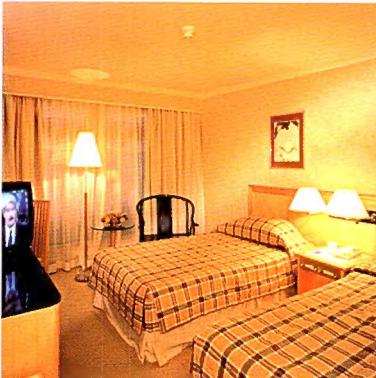
Photos by Shan Xiaogang, Shi Zhiqiang

Article by Shan Xiaogang

It is really an experience to visit a city like Pingyao in Shanxi Province, where the city walls, commercial streets, shops and residential houses of the last century all remain intact. Roaming around the ancient city, you will also hear many old stories and learn about the traditional customs.

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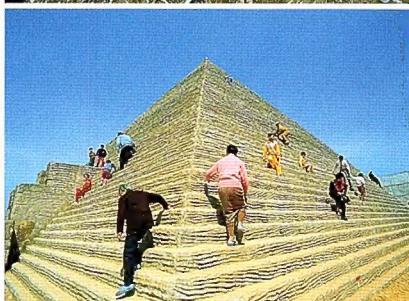
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FROM THE EDITOR

Here comes the charming autumn. In this delightful season, the land is adorned with the breathtaking beauty of fall colours, a temptation no one can resist. Sentiments abound while in the midst of such incredibly splendid autumn landscapes! Our "Where to Go in Multi-Hued Autumn" in this issue provides you with a list of places where you can relax in the pleasant autumn breeze and allow your imagination to flow freely.

The beautiful Jiuzhaigou is one of the recommendations. Being surrounded by the picturesque landscape in this virgin land, you feel as if you were in heaven. Now, the once inaccessible area is connected by a new circular route which starts and ends at Chengdu. From now on, transportation is no longer a problem for those who desire a visit to this spot. Since Jiuzhaigou is most enticing in the fall, you can admire the fantastic autumn scenery at the same time.

If you prefer a more thrilling experience, try riding through the glorious autumn in the mountain areas of Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet, where you can experience the real flavour of the wilderness. In Pingyao, the only one of the four oldest cities in China which still retains the original layout of the bygone days, you can leave your cares behind, and yield to a yearning for the pure and simple life.

For a shorter adventure, consider Chaozhou. Its famous three treasures — ceramics, snacks and gongfu tea — will definitely conquer your heart!

Photo by Huang Yan



ORIENTAL TREASURES

- The Best of Chinese Art



Lacquer plate with hollowed carving of flowers

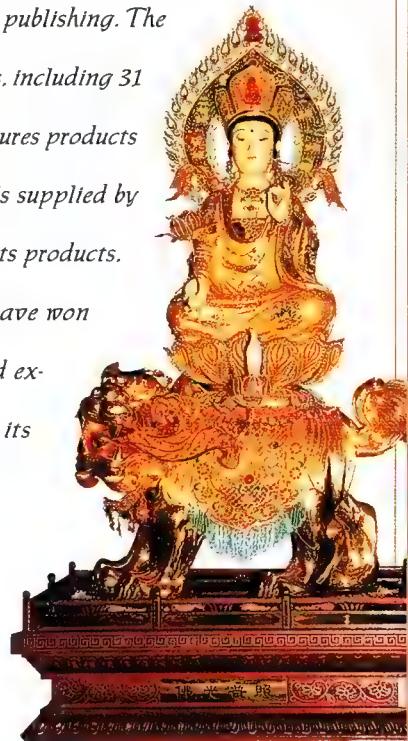
Beijing Gongmei Group specializes in arts and crafts but it is also a company involved in scientific research, marketing, education and publishing. The group owns over 60 industrial and commercial enterprises, including 31 joint ventures and five trade agencies abroad. It manufactures products according to clients' samples or designs, or using materials supplied by clients, and also conducts compensation trade. Over 50 of its products, including special handicrafts, carpets and artwork have won either international or domestic awards. It imports and exports 10,000 commodity lines in 60 categories and its products are sold to 130 countries and regions.

Beijing Gongmei Group aims to make a better world.

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Going to the River at Spring Time, a gorgeous embroidery work based on the theme of an ancient Chinese painting



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Team to Explore the World's Highest River

A team of 30 Chinese scientists and adventurers is bound for the source of the Yarlung Zangbo River in Tibet. The team will spend a few months studying the environment, resources, ecology, tourist resources and causes of natural disasters in the area along the Yarlung Zangbo Gorge, which is the longest, deepest and perhaps the most dangerous gorge in the world.

The Yarlung Zangbo Gorge, which stretches 496 kilometres and has an average depth of 5,000 metres, presents a major challenge for many adventurers. Several Chinese and foreign teams have failed in their attempts to negotiate the gorge. The current expedition will be funded by the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region. To obtain vital information about the dangerous sections of the river, the team will conduct an aerial survey by hot air balloon before challenging the river by boat. The team members have been selected from hundreds of brave volunteers from across the nation.

River Tours at Jinggangshan

Newly launched river tours have made the journey to Jinggangshan Mountain in Jiangxi Province much more fun. The cruise, on an inflatable boat drifting along the Zhusha River, takes about 90 minutes. Jinggangshan was one of the revolutionary bases of the Red Army led by the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao Zedong. Tourism has been flourishing in this area, and it has welcomed 10 million tourists over the past 10 years.

Canyon Park in Guizhou

China's first "canyon park" has recently opened to the public. Located in the Nanjiang Canyon lying between Guiyang, capital of Guizhou Province, and Kaiyang County, the Kaiyang Canyon Park offers visitors a wide variety of activities, including sightseeing, river rafting and fishing. The Nanjiang Canyon stretches more than 40 kilometres, with the cliffs on both sides over 300 metres high. More than 50 waterfalls have been found in the canyon, one of which, the Shexiang Waterfall, has a drop of more than 150 metres.

Pandas' New Home in Hong Kong

A pair of giant pandas are to be presented as a gift to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region by the Central Government. The Hong Kong Jockey Club has promised to donate HK\$40 million (US\$5.128 million) to build a home for the pandas at Ocean Park. The facility will be opened to the public early next year. The pair of pandas, 20-year-old Jiajia and 14-year-old An'an, will settle in Hong Kong as soon as their new home is completed.

Airport to Be Built in Jiuzhaigou

Southwest China's Sichuan Province plans to invest 1 billion yuan (US\$121 million) in a new airport in Jiuzhaigou. Located in Zhangla, Songpan county, on a site 3,000-3,500 metres above sea level, the airport will be the second highest in the country. Construction began this year. When completed, transport to Jiuzhaigou will be remarkably improved, and it will take only 30 minutes to get from Chengdu to Zhangla, 90 minutes from Jiuzhaigou. At the moment, it takes a day to reach Jiuzhaigou from Chengdu by bus.

Jiuzhaigou, listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site, is famous for its 114 beautiful lakes and ponds and numerous imposing waterfalls. Thirty-six kilometres from the new airport there lies another scenic site also on the world heritage list: Huanglong.

Yao Museum in Jinxiu, Guangxi

A museum focusing on the Yao ethnic group in Southwest China's Guangxi has drawn increasing attention from tourists. The museum was established in 1992 in Jinxiu, home to the two million Yao people in Guangxi. The Yao ethnic group has five branches: the Pan, Shanzi, Ao, Hualan, and Chashan. The museum displays the history and customs of the Yao people, clearly presenting the rich Yao culture and art. The founding of the museum has helped promote local tourism.

Asian Arts Festival, Hong Kong

The 17th festival of Asian Arts will be held from October 23 to November 14 in Hong Kong. Organised by the Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong this year, the event held every other year aims at paying tribute to the wealth of the Asian cultures. This year's performances will focus on four themes: ethnic traditions, cross-cultural highlights, contemporary theatre and splendour of local arts. Sixteen performing groups from 13 Asian countries and regions will stage their shows during the coming festival.

Book Helps Understand Dunhuang

When immersed in the great treasure house of the 1,600-year-old Mogao Grottoes, fascinated by the superb skills of ancient artists, the visitor often wants to know more about the excellent murals.

Frescoes and Fables, a new book in English published by the New World Press in Beijing, provides you with a better understanding of the wall paintings, which are based on legends, Buddhist scriptures and historical stories. The author, Li Guishan, teaches English at the Tianjin Institute of Technology. He travelled extensively in the Dunhuang area, collecting folk tales and legends by interviewing villagers and monks. This book contains 20 stories, fables and folk tales about the murals in the Mogao Grottoes.

The city centre of Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, is a lively place. Shops flank the streets selling daily necessities and various kinds of food. Inside Shaoxing Hotel on Huanshan Road, there is a Chinese-style garret with an antique facade, called Lingxiaoge.

Smelly Food — the Local Delicacies

In the restaurant many Shaoxing local dishes are provided, the most famous ones being such smelly things as strong-smell preserved bean-curd, Mildew Thousand Squares, and mashed taro steamed with amaranth juice. The smelly dishes have a quite strong mouldy smell and are not accepted by many who come from other parts of the world. But they are warmly welcomed by local people who would say: "The stronger the smell, the tastier the dish."

Among the smelly dishes, strong-smelling preserved bean-curd is fairly familiar to us. It is made by having bean-curd preserved and fermented. It smells strongly



Smelly Mildew Thousand Squares

smell and lose their shape the moment you touch them. Of course, the dishes offered to visitors are made of squares only lightly moulded and less smelly.

The mashed taro steamed with amaranth juice is made in this way: pickle amaranth in bitter water to the extent that it becomes mildewed, then use the strong-smelling juice it produces to steam young taro. The steamed young taro is tender and slick, with a light strange smell, which is much like strong-smell preserved

SHAOXING FOOD SMELLY ATTRACTIONS

Photos & article by He Ruifang



Strong-smell preserved bean-curd and fried fish

but tastes delicious. It tastes even better if it is eaten with thick chilli sauce.

The smelly Mildew Thousand Squares is made out of dried bean milk. Many thin sheets of dried bean milk are pressed together and cut into squares. The squares are put in a warm place until moulded. The moulded squares have a very strong

bean-curd. It smells bad but tastes good.

Shaoxing, however, is renowned not only for its smelly dishes but also for freshwater food and domestic fowl.

Unique Cuisine for Seafood and Fowl

Soft-shelled turtle stewed with bamboo shoots and chicken is a delicious soup, which is tonic for building up vital energy and nourishing the blood. Another delicious dish is to have soft-shelled turtle braised in soy sauce and steamed together with ham and Shaoxing Wine. Shaoxing locals eat the turtle meat as a tonic and sell their shells to practitioners of Chinese medicine.

Shaoxing has a rich variety of freshwater seafood. Shrimps braised with pork mince in fragrant vinegar and perch fried with snow beans and fungus are very refreshing.

When you enjoy Shaoxing food, you'd better also have a bottle of Shaoxing Wine. Brewed with the water from the Ji'an Lake it is mellow and nourishing, something that no tourist to Shaoxing should miss.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Holiday Pleasures in Qingdao

Article by Lu Qingyun

Qingdao, whose name literally means "Blue Island", is not actually an island, but a seaside city on the shore of the Yellow Sea at Jiaozhou Bay. With mountains on one side and the sea on the other, the city with broad streets, numerous beaches and convenient transportation is truly an ideal place to spend a holiday.

There are beautiful houses both inside and outside the city district. Many of them are Continental-style villas with red-tiled roofs. Spaced out on hill slopes, they are very different in architectural style — some have a chimney on the gabled roof or an open balcony, others have a garret on top. They are like houses in a fairy tale, quaint old castles or buildings in the land of immortals seen only in dreams.

One could spend a fortnight just admiring the beautiful houses. It would certainly be most interesting to spend the holidays in one of them. Some peddlers with a shrewd business sense have made "little houses" of straw in different styles and sell them to tourists as souvenirs of Qingdao. Few visitors to Qingdao, including myself, could resist the temptation to buy one or two of those "little houses" to take home.

Other than the seven bathing beaches, the place most frequented by tourists is the pier in the central district of the city. The pier extends 400 metres straight out into the sea. A walk on the magnificent pier in a cool and refreshing sea breeze while watching fellow strollers is an exhilarating experience.

The pier was originally a loading platform built during the Guangxu reign of the Qing Dynasty. It became what we see today, a cement structure with iron guard-rails on both sides, after it was reconstructed in 1931. Walking to the end of the pier and looking back, one will obtain

a full view of the city of Qingdao with its tall buildings and mansions and its new look. Standing at the end of the pier is the Pavilion of Revolving Waves. People can walk around it or climb up to its top storey and enjoy an entrancing view of the sea with a completely carefree feeling.

Not far from the pier is the island of Little Qingdao with a lighthouse on it. The island can be conveniently reached by motorboats.

There are a great number of stalls selling refreshments and souvenirs. Since the pier is an ideal place to watch the beautiful sunset in the evening and the glorious sunrise in the morning, the stall keepers are never short of customers.

Coming back from the pier, one may take a stroll along Zhongshan Street, the busiest shopping street in Qingdao, where the shops selling dried seafood do brisk business. Visitors from all over China as well as overseas all seem to want to take some dried shrimps or scallops back home with them.

If time permits, one should climb Little Fish Hill in the city district. The top of the hill offers a panoramic view of the city proper with more vistas of villas and houses. With such beautiful scenery around the hill, it is also a place where local residents take walks.

The restaurants on the sea front offer a great variety of delicious seafood for which Qingdao is famous, including giant prawns, abalone and sea fish.

For those who like to climb mountains, one option is Mount Laoshan, not far to the east of Qingdao. It is a place to drink cool spring water, see the ancient Temple of Supreme Purity and dream of the past. 





One can reach Jiuzhaigou from Chengdu in one day's travel.

The Chengdu-Jiuzhai Circular Road is an asphalt-paved highway.

There are more than 20 attractions along this circular route.

Improved environmental protection has enhanced the attraction of Jiuzhaigou.

There is a folk customs village in the ravine demonstrating the local Tibetan customs.

The New Circular Route to Jiuzhaigou —A Symphony of COLOUR and WATER

Photos by Wang Jianjun, Huang Yanhong Art by Huang Yanhong

九環線遊覽示意圖

Sketch Map of the Circular Route to Jiuzhaigou



Though the charming scenery of Jiuzhaigou (Nine-Village Valley) in Sichuan Province was unforgettable, the road conditions used to be poor and there was potential danger at every turn along the way.

Recently, a friend invited me there again, saying, "Come—the danger is gone now. You can start from Chengdu in the morning and reach Jiuzhaigou in the evening and stay there overnight." So, the old dangerous road had been changed into a highway. Pleasantly surprised, I agreed and we set out from Chengdu in the early morning, but the many attractions along the way prevented us from reaching Jiuzhaigou the same evening.

This recently completed "circular road to Jiuzhaigou" (Chengdu — Maoxian — Jiuzhaigou — Pingwu — Chengdu) did not disappoint me. The road is very smooth and, being a circular route, eliminates the need to retrace one's steps. Over 20 attractions fill the route; in addition to natural wonders, there are many historical and cultural sites, making it a unique trip.



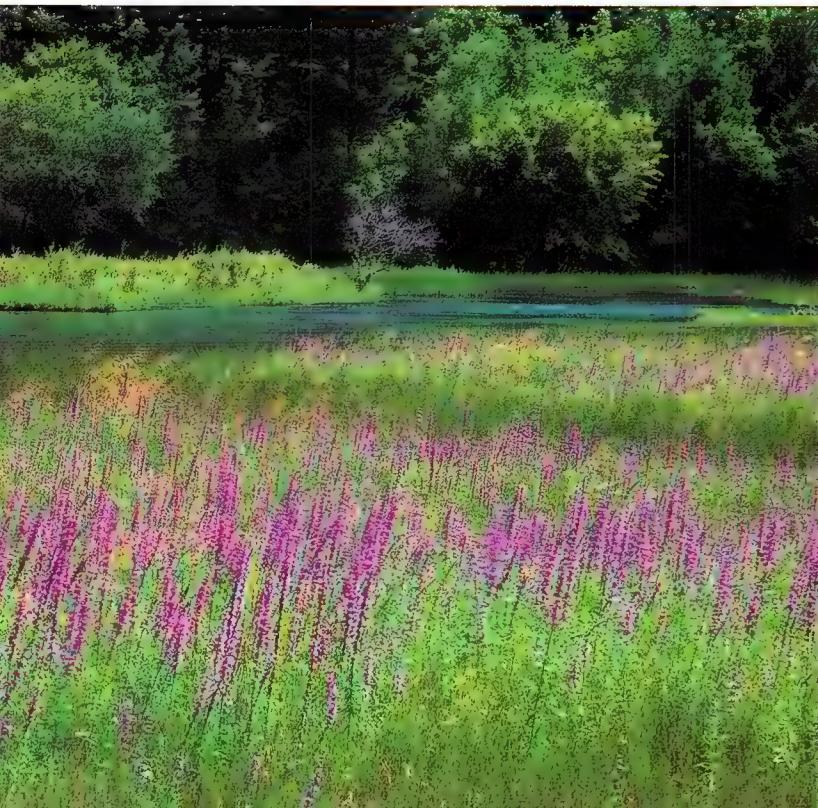


九寨溝導遊圖
Tourist Map of Jiuzhaigou Valley



New Circular Road, Section I: JIUZHAI GOU

Autumn in Jiuzhaigou is three-dimensional. One can enjoy the sights, hear the sounds of water, wind and chirping birds, and smell the aroma of earth and grass. Finding yourself suddenly in the brace of a virgin land is an intoxicating and overwhelming experience.





The colours of Jiuzhaigou change with the season.

A New Phase in Jiuzhaigou – Environmental Protection

When Jiuzhaigou was listed as a "World Natural Heritage" several years ago, people praised it and realised the responsibility to protect it. As world forests are disappearing, deserts expanding and the atmosphere becomes increasingly polluted, beautiful natural surroundings have become fewer and fewer in number. As a result, "a catalogue of world natural heritage sites"—a world-wide "index"—has been worked out to warn mankind of this vital fact.

Entering Jiuzhaigou, I was deeply impressed by the new measures taken there. To protect the natural environment, visitors may enjoy the day in the Muni Gully but must lodge outside the ravine at night. There is a vehicle-washing station at the entrance to the scenic area, to wash and disinfect all vehicles before entering.

As we travelled along the smooth, asphalt-paved road, we occasionally saw Tibetan villagers working hard to keep the area clean. This has provided the 100 or so original inhabitants in the ravine with regular work.

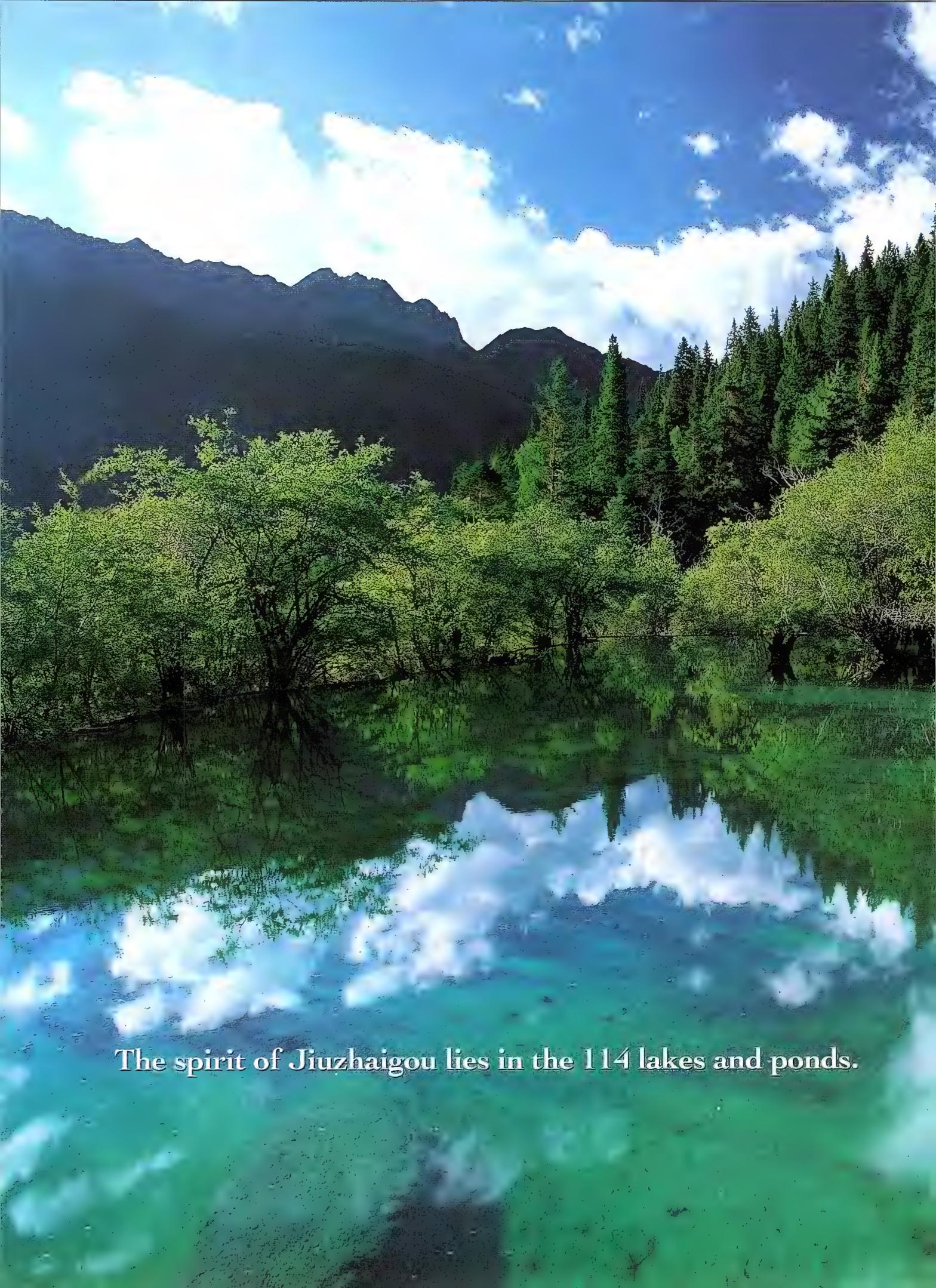
Lost for Words Describing the Autumn Colours

Autumn in Jiuzhaigou is a world of colours, as maples, David maples, common smoke trees and others vie one another for glory. The colourful display of one tree is echoed by a whole mountain of



1. Reeds change their colour when winter comes.
(by Qin Changping)
2. A natural garden (by Wang Jianjun)
3. Nuorilang Falls in summer (by Wang Jianjun)
4. Jiuzhaigou in winter (by Chen Jin)
5. On an autumn slope





The spirit of Jiuzhaigou lies in the 114 lakes and ponds.



1. Shuzheng Lakes (by Wang Jianjun)
2. Wolong Lake (by Chen Jin)
3. Xiniu Lake (by Wang Jianjun)



trees. The colours in the water are much quieter as if nature is in a philosophical reverie. A gentle stir of the whorl weeds and water drops add infinite mystery to the blue and green waters. Even the dead branches in the water refuse to be forgotten; calcified into fine works of art, they give themselves a tragic touch. Visitors are moved by the overwhelming beauty and snap many photographs. Painters and photographers are rueful because they can capture only a tiny fraction of the beauty.

It is said that Lucas, a specialist who came specially to verify the natural heritage designation, also visited Jiuzhaigou in autumn. Face to face with the rich display of the colours of nature in China, he said with a sigh, "There are no appropriate English words for some of the colours here."

Mystical Waters, Lakes and Ponds

Water is the soul of Jiuzhaigou. The local people offer a string of statistics about water as if enumerating their family treasures: "There are 114 ponds, 17 waterfalls, five shallows, 47 springs and 11 rapids." The waters enchant visitors, particularly in the early morning when the ponds are as smooth as mirrors with mountain reflections. It appears



1

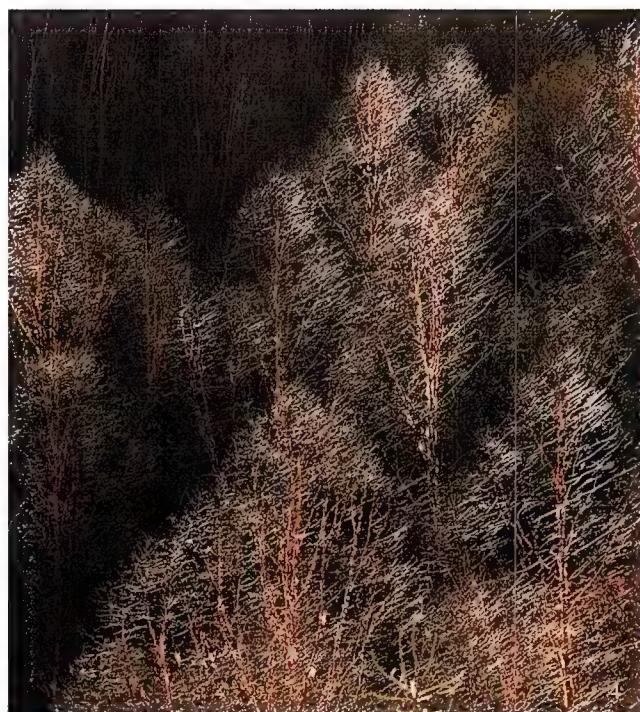
The vast virgin forest has turned to a sea of brilliant colours.



2



1. Display of vitality (by Feng Zhongneng)
2. Reflections (by Yu Ning)
3. The colours of autumn (by Wang Jianjun)
4. Catching the first sun rays (by Feng Zhongneng)



as if "fish swim in the sky and birds fly in the water".

The trees entwined by wisteria at the edge of the Mirror Lake make one think of lovers in close embrace. Hence in this "Lovers Park", many couples, inspired by the trees, boldly display their intimacy.

The withered reeds filling Reed Pond ripple continually as if they are telling an old story. The water birds coming and going at the marsh from time to time seem to concoct more anecdotes in the story that never ends.

The Multi-Coloured Pond is the most striking. It is as if dyes had been poured into the water, mixing into colours so unusual that they seem beyond the range of nature's spectrum.

There are no swans in the Swan Lake. The seemingly dead trees that have fallen into the lake, however, have sprouted young branches and are flowering as if unwilling to come to the end of their lives.

The Five-Colour Pond is the pride of Jiuzhaigou. Looking downward from the Tiger's Mouth, its colours appear as exaggerated as an overturned treasure box in an Arabian tale. Visitors endlessly take away images of this gorgeous sight with them.

The "secrets" of the Grass Pond are found in its duckweed and grasses. Water surrounds the grass and duckweed and is in turn surrounded by them. When the early morning sun emerges between the mountains, the sun's rays give the grass and duckweed a mysterious touch, fascinating artists and visitors who stroll leisurely.





Under the water there exists a mysterious world.



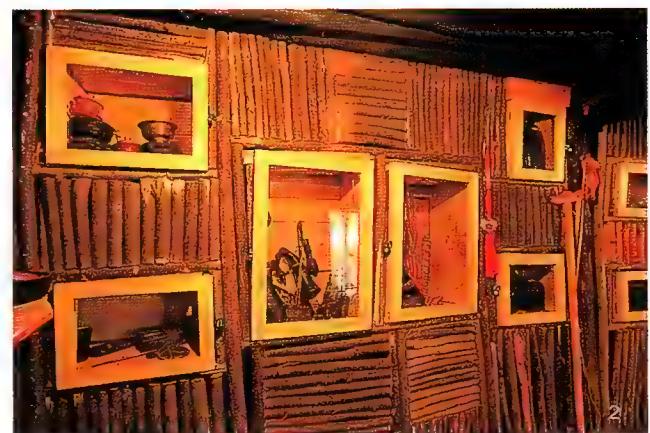
1. The colourful world of Wuhuahai Lake
(by Wang Jianjun)
2. Stones at the bottom of the lake look like sapphires.
3. Withered branches
4. No art work can be as creative as this.
(by Chen Jin)

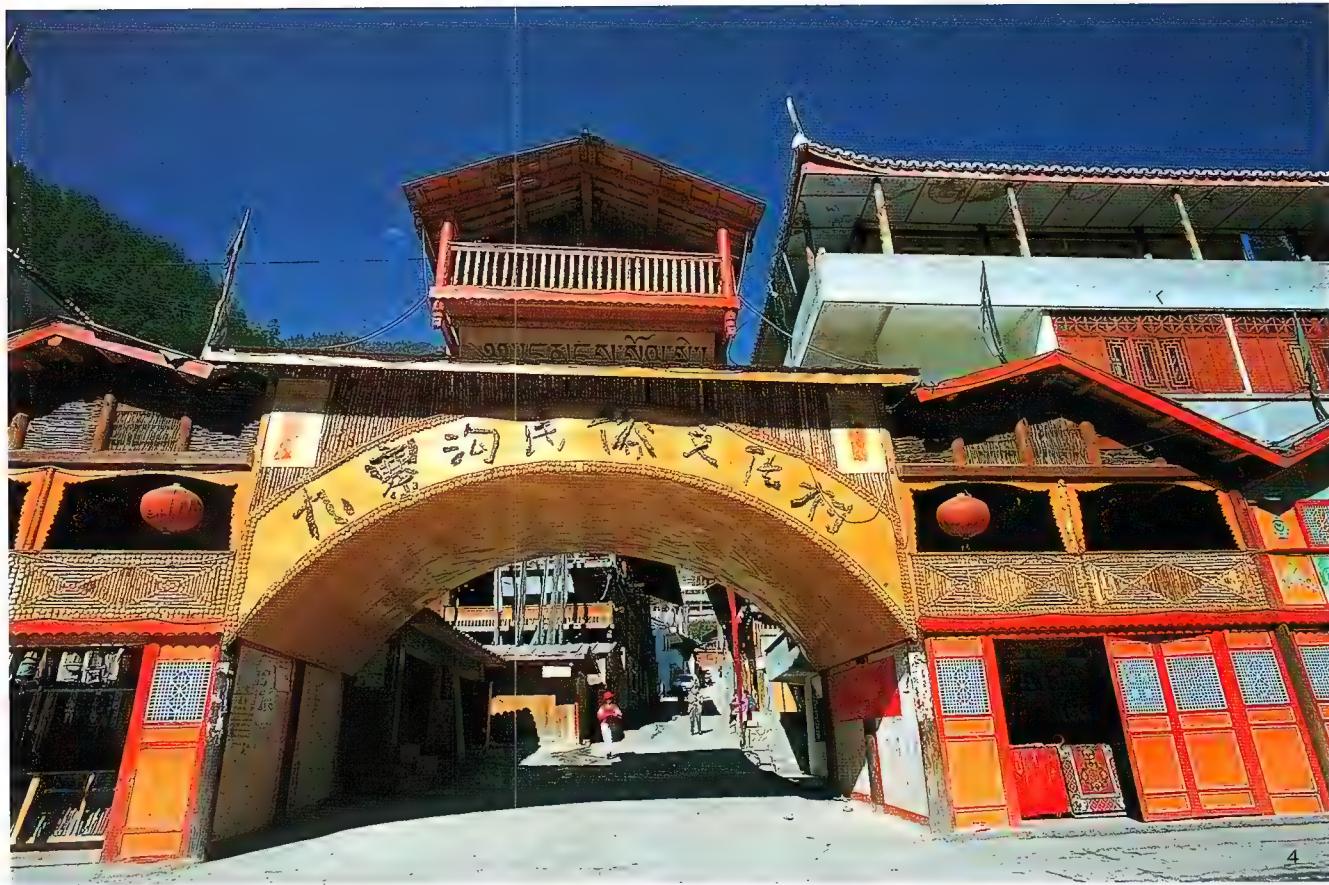
An Evening of Local Culture

In contrast to the natural scenic attractions, the bonfire party in which we participated at the Jiuzhai Hotel was a vibrant and lively affair, permeated with warm feelings and hearty enjoyment.

The bonfire party began with powerful enchanting religious music which echoed in incense-smoke-filled air. A group of grotesque "ghosts and spirits" filed out, followed by monks of the Benbo sect of lamaism, who circled inside the arena, chanting scriptures. The spectators joined in, asking for blessings. As wine was offered and blessings given, the performers began to sing and dance. A banquet of roast lamb followed, and visitors were offered barley wine by beautiful girls.

There was a Tibetan-Qiang-style tug-of-war, a game in which everybody participated voluntarily. Although most of the participants were young and physically strong, there were also quite a few thin and scholarly men who probably wanted to try their internal strength. Most of those reaching the finals, however, were burly fellows. At the sound of a whistle, the two sides started to pull. It was a long time before one of the men budged and the winner was decided and given a surprising reward — he was invited to an imaginary wedding ceremony with a beautiful Tibetan "bride". The performances reached the climax with the appearance of a Tibetan giant 2.21 metres tall. Yemucuo, the giant, dressed in gorgeous, traditional Tibetan clothes with very valuable ornaments, entered the arena in gigantic strides, causing an uproar in the audience. After the performances, the visitors vied for photographs with the giant, only to find themselves miserably dwarfed as they stood next to him.





Traditional local Tibetan customs remain throughout the valley.

1. Tibetan dance performed at the party
2. Exhibits displayed at the showroom
3. Having a picture taken with the giant
4. The entrance of the folk culture village
5. Traditional weaving techniques demonstrated



Authentic Village Lifestyle in the Valley

The ancient Shuzheng Village is the largest village in the ravine. Not long ago, the villagers voluntarily pooled their money and manpower to turn their village into the Jiuzhaigou Tibetan Folk Culture Village. Walking through the elaborately decorated village gate, visitors can savour the authentic lifestyle of Jiuzhaigou villagers.

In a weaving household, an elderly Tibetan woman was busy at a loom upstairs. With a skein of wool wound around her waist and the other end tied on a stool, she worked the shuttle with both hands. Many women in Jiuzhaigou still weave with hand looms.

There was also a medicinal herbs-gathering household, where many different medicinal herbs were hung to dry on the walls. The master of the household was a famous farmer who had for decades earned a living from medicinal herbs.

Although hunting was banned and the days of "hunters in every family and guns in every household" are gone, there is now a "hunting" household portraying life of the villagers in bygone days.

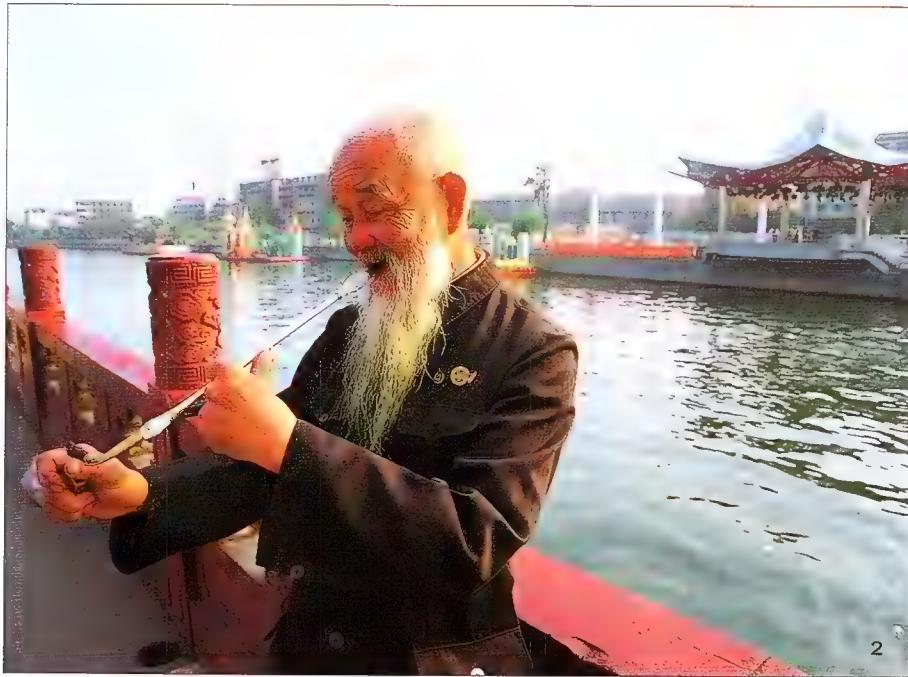
On display in the Folk Customs Exhibition House are wooden bowls, ladles, basins, farm implements and Buddha-worshipping paraphernalia donated by local villagers.

There are also song and dance performances given by the villagers to portray aspects of their daily life.





New Circular Road, Section II : **CHENGDU – DIEXI**



Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan Province, is the starting point as well as the terminal of this new circular road. It should be by no means neglected.

A City with a Long History

Chengdu is an ancient city with a glorious history of 2,500 years. During the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280), it was the capital of the state of Shu founded by Liu Bei.

The historical sites in the city district that attract flocks of tourists include the Thatched Hut of the Tang-dynasty poet, Du Fu, Shrine to Zhuge Liang, Tomb of the tenth century emperor, Wang Jian, and the Ming-dynasty River-View Pavilion. And to satisfy the palate here, one can try the delicious snacks for which

Chengdu is famous: Laitangyuan (sweet dumplings), Longchaoshou (wanton soup), and Husband and Wife's Beef and Tripe Slices.

Two huge construction projects were completed in Chengdu during the past two years. One is the environmental protection project on the Funan River, and the other is the Tianfu Plaza on People's Street South.

In addition to the sights, sipping tea at one of the tea-houses while listening to Sichuan Opera is an unforgettable experience here.
(*The best way to tour the city and see the true flavour of Chengdu is to hire a pedicab and go through the city's old streets and back alleys.*)

The World Park: Travel the World Without Visas

The World Park is located in Pixian County, less than 20 kilometres from the provincial capital. Occupying more than 30 hectares of land, the park has more than 100 reproductions of scenic wonders and characteristic structures around the world — hence its slogan, "Travel the World Without Visas". The park, which has been open for over five years, displays most of these wonders in their original size. The peak time of activities and performances in the park is in the evening.

(*There is a bus to the Dujiangyan Water Conservancy from Chengdu's West Gate bus station every five minutes. Get off at the World Park stop.*)

Dujiangyan Water Conservancy: A 2,000-Year-Old Project

The grand scale of the Dujiangyan Water Conservancy, which has long been world famous, cannot be really appreciated unless one visits the site. As the water meanders on musically, one is filled with a profound respect for the ancient engineering work that continues to serve the people in the area. It is a working "ancient relic" that is rarely seen anywhere in the world. As I stood on the river bank and listened to the expert explanation of the project, I was deeply impressed by the intelligence of Li Bing, the engineer who designed the work 2,000 years ago. He set up the project to prevent floods and float timber. To eliminate the sand, he found the secret of "dredging the shoals deep and building the dikes low". The "Fish Snout" that diverts the

flow of the river into two and the "Dike of Flying Sand", in particular, are wonders of hydraulic engineering.

(*The best way of touring the Dujiangyan Water Conservancy is to take the cable car from Lidui Park, which offers an aerial view of the entire work and saves both time and energy. A nearby interesting place to visit is the Qingcheng Mountain, a famous Taoist mountain.*)

Army Base of Three Kingdoms Period

After crossing the Pass of Flying Sand, we soon reached the county

town of Wenchuan, at the strategic gateway to Aba Prefecture. Most of this region is populated by the Qiang ethnic group. The fortress-like houses of the Qiang people built on lofty mountains look like defence works rather than dwellings.

The Minjiang River flows through the county town. On the slope on the eastern bank is a section of the town wall, which winds its way up the mountain like the Great Wall. Although the wall was rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Wenchuan people still call it "Jiang Wei's City" because this general of the state of Shu in the Three Kingdoms period built his battlements here and turned the town into his army base. Wandering along the broken wall, scenes of the old days can be easily conjured up.

(*A Qiang village near Wenchuan has recently been designated as a tourist spot, where visitors can climb up the fortress, visit the stone houses and sip wine together with the villagers.*)

Diexi Lakes: Beauty Brought Forth by Disaster

Diexi was a small town destroyed in an earthquake 65 years ago. The earthquake buried the town, cut off a river and created a series of lakes on the plateau. A high stone fortress standing near the lakes offers a panoramic view of the scenery. With sun rays reflected in the water of this ribbon of lakes, the scenery enchants visitors, almost allowing people to forget the disaster hidden behind the quiet, green water. There is, however, a forest of strange rocks that tumbled down the mountains during the earthquake, creating another

scenic wonder, and reminding people of the price paid for the beautiful scenery.

(*After seeing the Diexi Lakes, visitors can see the Commander's Terrace of the woman general Fan Libua and ruins of the ravaged town of Diexi. In the Songping Ravine on the opposite side of the river, there is another string of high-mountain lakes, where the scenery is also very beautiful.*)



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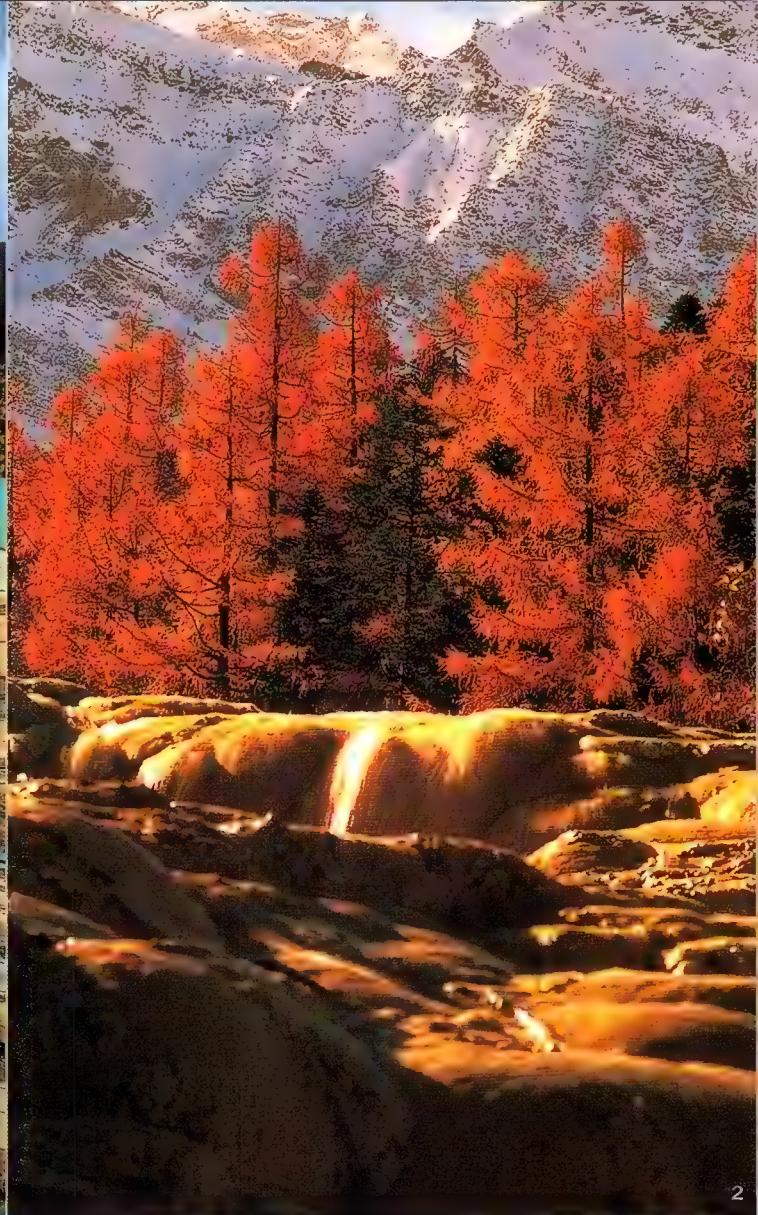


5



1. Where the town of Diexi was buried after an earthquake
2. On the banks of Funan River
3. Tianfu Plaza
4. The lakes created by the earthquake
5. The walls of Jiang Wei's City (by Yin Gang)





New Circular Road, Section III : MUNI GULLY - YELLOW DRAGON TEMPLE

The Zhaga Waterfall

There are two great attractions in Muni Gully. Both have found their way into legends, which describe the Zhaga Waterfall as an energetic, robust man and the Erdaohai Lake a gentle maiden. There are plenty of "grandma's tales" about these natural attractions. Not knowing exactly what to expect, we decided to see for ourselves if the descriptions fit.

Although it was only late autumn, as we headed for the Zhaga Waterfall, huge snow flakes began to fall and soon covered the plank-path with a thin layer of white. A roaring sound began to echo in the forested heights. We thought at first it was the wind but as we walked further, the sound grew louder and louder and we finally came into sight of the waterfall. The water fell down from a precipice about 100 metres high in several steps, throwing up a thick mist at each step and creating a milky brown water curtain below each of them. The limestone mountain appeared torn open by colourful watery ribbons, with the energy of a robust young man.

Erdaohai: Horses, Songs and Improved Eyesight

Retracing our way back to the fork in the road at Sanlian Township, we entered another section of the gully. Along the way, we saw quite a few carefree tourists on horseback ambling over the pastures and through forests and the ravine.

Everybody says that, "No body of water is worth seeing after the waters of Jiuzhaigou". When we reached Erdaohai Lake, we found that the lake was indeed unique and worthy of the quote. A plank path wound its way along the shore of green trees. The woods and the lake merged so well together that one could not tell whether it was a lake or a forest.

Coming out of the sea of trees into an open meadow we heard the vibrant sounds of the horse grooms singing Tibetan folk songs. The loud and clear voices echoing in the ravine inspired the tourists to sing as well; in the depths of the ravine their voices sounded as good as pop stars.

Further on was the hot spring of Pearl Lake. We smelled the sulphurous aroma long before we arrived. Not far from the lake were



1. An art work left by tourists

2. Tanmianhua looks as if muddy waves were rushing down.

(by Bian Zhiwu)

3. Snow flakes are falling in the Muni Gully.

4. The quiet Erdaohai Lake

the (Niubi) Ox Nose Springs. As it is said that rinsing the eyes with the water from these two springs can improve one's eyesight, the springs were crowded with city people with poor eyesight waiting their turn.

The Scenic Wonder of Huanglong

It was only a short distance from Songpan to Huanglong (Yellow Dragon). The mountains along the way were enshrouded in mist. Through the mist we could momentarily catch sight of scenic wonders.

The Fuyuan Bridge is the starting point of this scenic area. Looking up, the Snowy Tripod, the highest peak, was like in another world. As we followed the stone steps up to the top we were spellbound by the incredible scenic wonders along the way. The most spectacular ones were places where water had eroded the limestone surface of the mountains and the multi-coloured ponds.

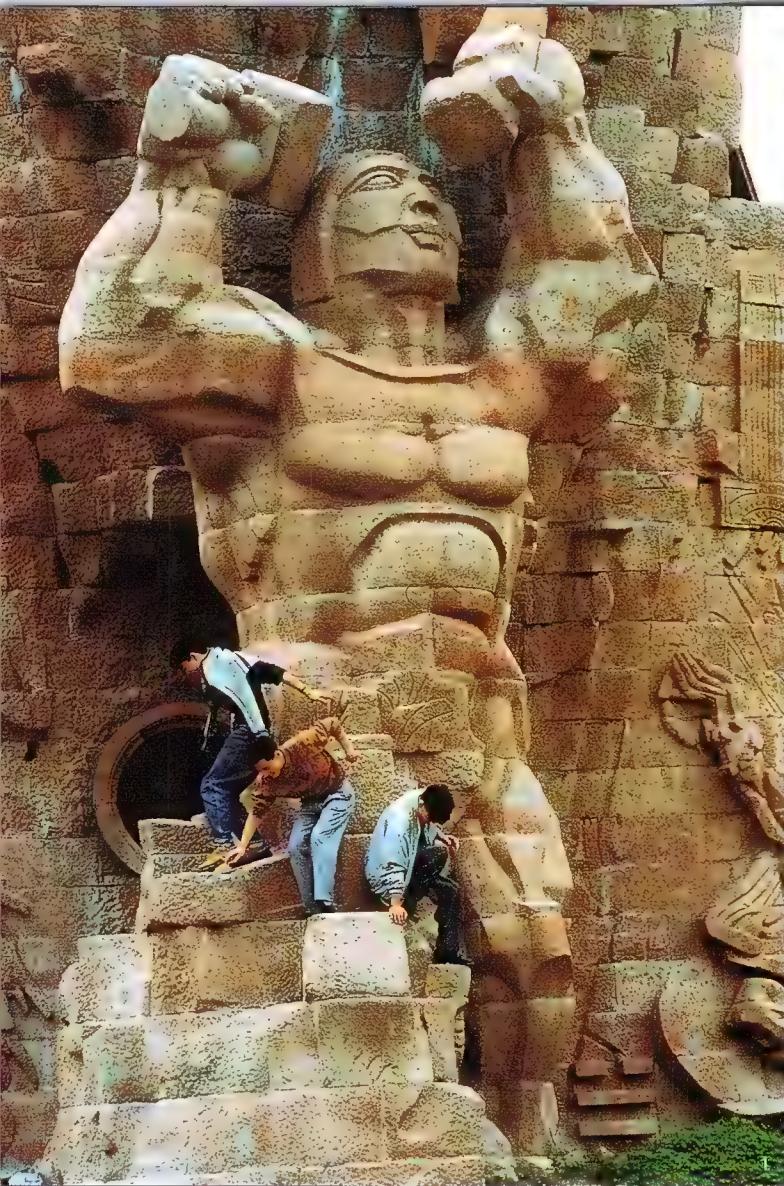
It was a shame that we had only three hours to see the wonders created by nature in 30,000 years. But we were all deeply impressed,



黃龍、牟尼溝導遊示意圖 Tourist Map of Huanglong and Muni Gully

particularly with the mountain slope that looked as if muddy yellow water was rolling down its surface. The mountain slope was actually dry. Legend says that as the Yellow Dragon Priest was boiling his soybean milk, it spilled out of the pot onto the mountain and created this spectacular scene. From a sightseeing pavilion above the Yellow Dragon Temple, we had a great view of the mountain.





which are particularly impressive because they resemble the bridges in the Imperial Palace in Beijing. There are also dragons, typical symbols of the emperor, painted and sculptured in a great variety of lively poses. They are said to be as many as 9,999, even more numerous than those in the imperial palace in Beijing. The square in front of the main hall has today become a local centre of activity for trade fairs.

(The route from Nanping to Pingwu goes past the Wanglang Nature Reserve where giant pandas, golden-hair monkeys and other rare animals can be found. However, seeing them requires time, patience and luck.)

Li Bai's Home: A Deserted Historical Site

Li Bai was a very famous poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Longxiyuan, the house with a courtyard where the immortal poet had lived for more than 20 years turned out to be rather disappointing.

Longxiyuan in Qinglian Town, Jiangyou County, is a place of great historic significance in the life of Li Bai, and yet the large courtyard is in disrepair and is deserted. The old custodian has the deepest reverence for Li Bai and knows all about the poet's life and his home. When he has no visitors, he spends his spare time planting trees.

(In Qinglian, there are other historical sites connected with Li Bai, including Li Bai's Shrine, the Pink Bamboo Pavilion, and the Full Moon Grave.)

Mount Baochuan: Tightrope Performances

Mount Baochuan in Jiangyou is another interesting spot to visit. The mountain, though not high, is a sheer pinnacle. A steel tightrope wire connects it with another peak, and performances take place every day on it. Generations of acrobats have performed here, showing

New Circular Road, Section IV: PINGWU—CHENGDU

Leaving Jiuzhaigou, we started on the second half of the circular route and reached Pingwu.

Bao'en Temple: The Imperial Dream of a Local Ruler

The Bao'en (Repaying Kindness) Temple, the pride of Pingwu, is hidden deep in the mountains and still stands as imposing as an

imperial palace after 500 years. Had it not been renamed Repaying Kindness Temple, the emperor would have long had it demolished because it had surpassed the limitation for local buildings in both size and design.

The imposing temple has several large halls and the Bridges of Golden Water,

various one legged and hand-stand stunts. Until a year ago when one performer lost control and fell into the ravine, there were no safety lines used during these dangerous acts.

(One can also visit the Buddha's Cave and Cave of Golden Rays nearby. Jiangyou is also the hometown of Monk Haideng. A special tour for learning martial arts can be arranged.)



Seven-Bend Mountain: The Great Temple

The Seven-Bend Mountain became famous due to its Great Temple. The temple's front gate is inscribed with the two characters for "Emperor's Hometown" and is said to be the palace of Emperor

Wenchang in heaven. Among the gods, Emperor Wenchang is in charge of the appointments of officials. For centuries, those who wished to pass the imperial examinations and rise in officialdom always came here to pay homage. The tradition continues today.

Around the more than 20 ancient structures in the temple are innumerable silk banners, all presents to Emperor Wenchang. Parents of successful students would present a silk banner to express their gratitude to the emperor in Heaven.

(Bus tours may bypass the Seven-Bend Mountain. Those with their own transport would surely enjoy a visit, especially if they wish to request a favour.)

Deyang: The Wall of Art

The Wall of Art at Deyang is actually a section of the foundation of a highway containing surreal sculptures. This original artistic creation is nearly 1,000 metres long and eight metres high, on which are sculptural works in bas-relief or deep bas-relief. Many of them, such as the *Light of Wisdom*, the 83-metre-long *Song of Life*, and the 12 pillars depicting the 12 symbolic animals denoting the 12-year astrology cycle, are inspired by the 5,000-year-old Sanxingdui Culture.

(Also in Deyang is the Confucius Temple.)

Sanxingdui Museum: Rich Cultural Displays

Sanxingdui, on the outskirts of Guanghan, became famous overnight after many 5,000-year-old cultural relics were discovered there. The age of the cultural relics alone was already very surprising, but as well, the objects themselves are in a great variety of unusual shapes and superbly cast. The bronze busts are particularly impressive.

The Sanxingdui Museum was opened in October 1997. The primitiveness of the extraordinary exhibits in the museum is enhanced by the modern atmosphere of the museum building.

(The admission to the museum costs 20 yuan.)



1. Detail of the Wall of Art
2. Inside the Great Temple on the Seven-Bend Mountain
3. A bronze statue displayed in the Sanxingdui Museum

Tips for the Traveller

It is suggested to follow an organised tour to Jiuzhaigou, available from major hotels in Chengdu. It usually takes 6-10 days to go through Dujiangyan and Maoxian to Jiuzhaigou and return.

The following travel agencies may arrange your trip to Jiuzhaigou, but you need to call ahead of schedule.

Sichuan China Travel Service

Add: 15 First Ring Road, Second Section, Chengdu Tel: 5562986

Sichuan Rainbow Travel Service

Add: 173 Zhengfu Street, Chengdu Tel: 6629018

Jiuzhaigou Travel Service

Add: Hualong Tower, Yingmenkou, Chengdu Tel: 7778696

West Sichuan Travel Service

Add: 3/F, West Gate Station, Chengdu Tel: 7767691

Aba International Travel Service

Add: 103 Jinyu Street, Chengdu Tel: 7776234

Suggested Itineraries for Individual Travellers

A. Circular Route

Day 1: Leave Chengdu, visit the World Park, Dujiangyan, stay at Dujiangyan. Day 2: Visit Wenchuan, Songpan. Day 3: Visit Muni Gully, go back to Songpan for the night. Day 4: Visit Huanglong and stay there. Days 5, 6: Visit Jiuzhaigou and stay there. Day 7: Visit the county seat of Jiuzhaigou and Bao'en Temple in Pingwu, stay in Jiangyou. Day 8: Visit Baochuan Mountain and Li Bai's residence, stay in Jiangyou. Day 9: Visit the Great Temple on Seven-Bend Mountain and the Wall of Art, stay at Guanghan. Day 10: Return to Chengdu after visiting the Sanxingdui Museum.

B. Linear Route

Itineraries for the first seven days in this route are the same as in Route A. Day 8: Return to Chengdu.

C. Express Route to Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong

Day 1: Leave Chengdu and stay in Songpan for the night. Day 2: Visit Huanglong and stay there. Days 3, 4: Visit Jiuzhaigou and stay there. Day 5: Return to Chengdu.

Note: If you travel with your own car, the time may be shortened; but if you go by bus, you'd better prepare for delays of one or two days, caused by transport.

Accommodation is convenient at the stops. But in busy seasons such as autumn, you'd better make reservations at Jiuzhaigou and Songpan. Beds are also available at Shuzheng Lake, with simple conditions and cheap cost.





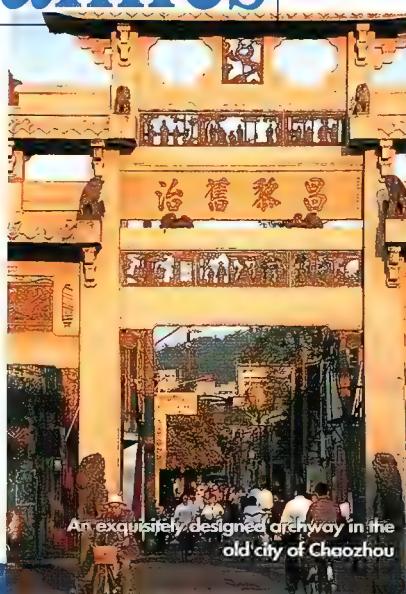
A Learning Tour in Chaozhou:

Gongfu Tea

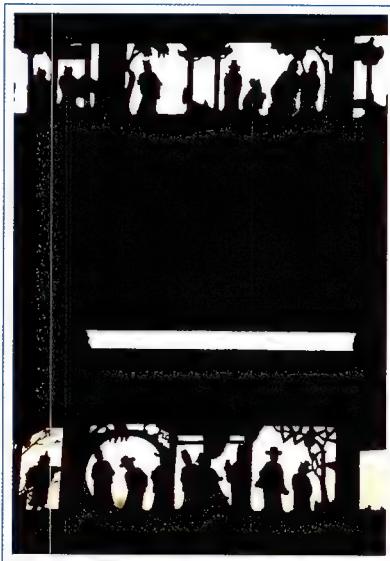
Photos & article by Shi Baoxiu

Ceramics

Snacks



An exquisitely designed archway in the old city of Chaozhou



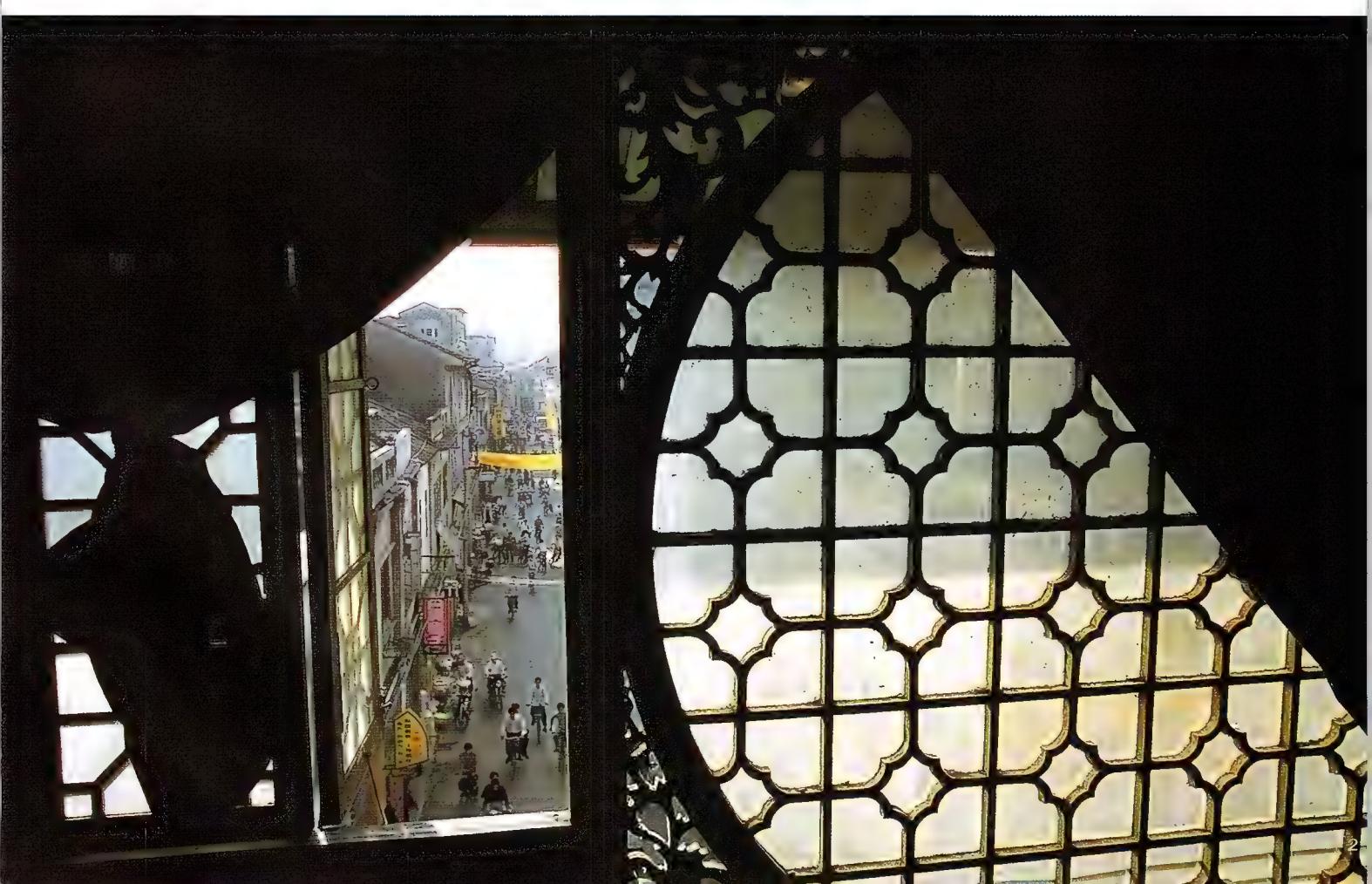
Chaozhou, in Guangdong Province, has a history of more than 1,000 years. Han Yu, a great Tang-dynasty man of letters, had served a stint there as an official. In one of his poems he extolled the city as a "land of tidal waves, and south gateway to the great ocean." It is said that during his time, the sea was just 15 kilometres from the city's southern gate, so that from the top of the city wall you could see the sparkling ocean spreading as far as the edge of the sky. In the deep of night you could hear the murmur of the sea. Hence the name "Chaozhou", meaning "land of surging waves".

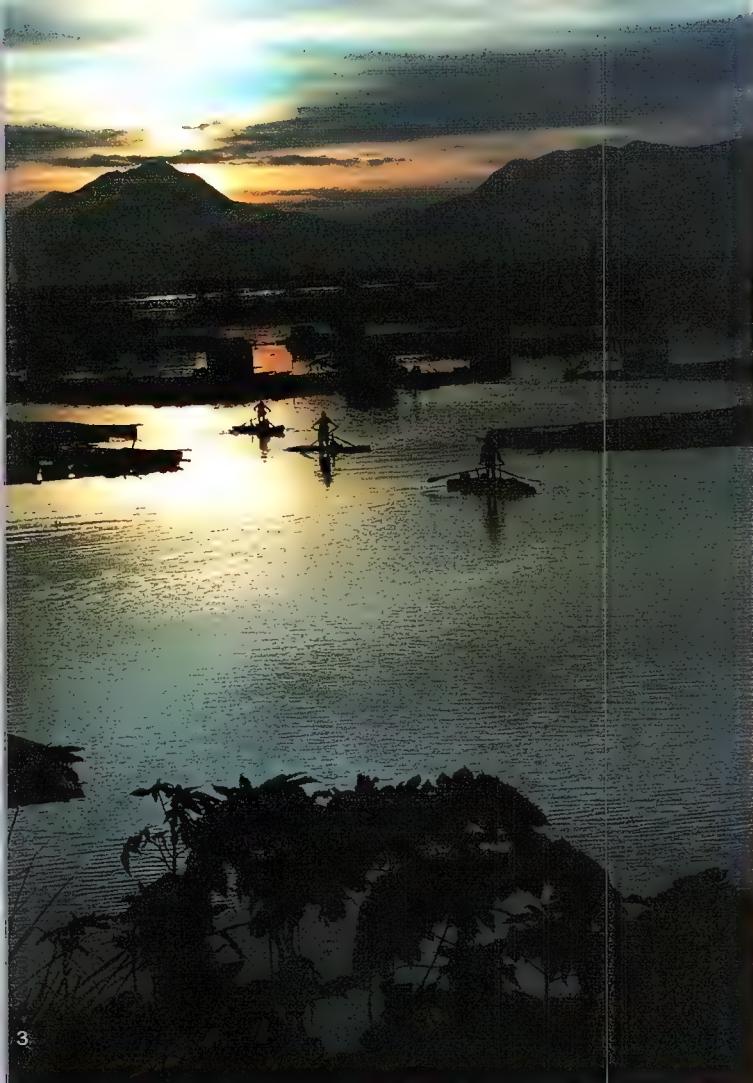
Today, the sea has long consigned itself to a distant corner, but the land of the ancient city still holds the fascination with its wealth of historical and cultural legacies. The Guangji Gate, Xiangzi Bridge, Kaiyuan Temple, Phoenix Pagoda, Temple of Lord Han Yu — all these landmarks stand testimony to the city's poetic and fabled past. The maze of streets, old buildings, wells, and archways have been there for so long that people simply take them for granted. The finely crafted wood carvings, stone sculptures, Chaozhou-style embroidery and drawwork are part of the local cultural scene, and the music of the Chaozhou Opera seems to be always lingering in the air, beckoning listeners to return to the theatre time and again.

However, nothing is more quintessential to Chaozhou's heritage than gongfu tea, snacks, and ceramics, which are meant both to entertain and enlighten those who care to come and learn.



Nothing is more quintessential to Chaozhou's rich legacy than gongfu tea, snacks and ceramics.







Lesson One

Gongfu Tea



1

Previous page:

1. The gorgeous Chaozhou embroidery
2. An old street viewed from inside the tower of Guangji Gate
3. Though not located by the sea, Chaozhou provides good seafood dishes. (by Zheng Zhenqiang)
4. The old city of Chaozhou built in a chessboard style of vertical streets and horizontal lanes
5. Porcelain for roof decoration: a traditional building material
6. Lord Huang's Temple, a late Qing-dynasty building, is renowned for its distinct Chaozhou-style wood carvings.

This page:

1. Gongfu tea is made strong and served in tiny cups.
2. The tea produced in Lingtou Mountain in the suburbs of Chaozhou is as well known as the tea from Phoenix Mountain.

In the back alleys of the old city of Chaozhou, men and women, old and young, are often seen nursing a tiny cup of tea in a most relaxed manner. The tea set is a regular fixture in office buildings or dwellings, where the hosts always have tea at hand to serve their guests. Gongfu tea — a ritual tea drinking style — is, indeed, ubiquitous in Chaozhou.

As a matter of fact, gongfu tea is the embodiment of Chinese tea ceremony. This "discipline" involves the choice of water and tea, use of fire, handling of the tea set, the way water is poured, and drinking etiquette.

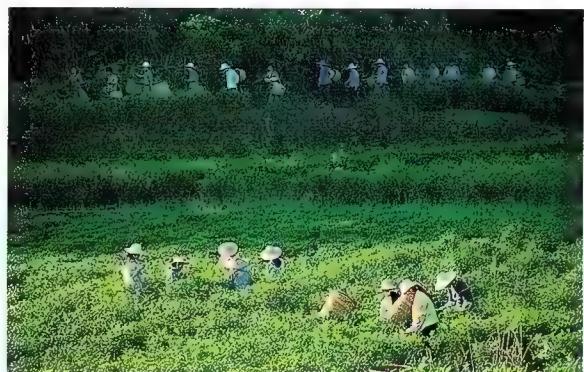
First, the choice of water. Only spring water from the mountains should be used. In Chaozhou, mineral water tapped from the clefts and fissures in the granite Phoenix Mountain is used.

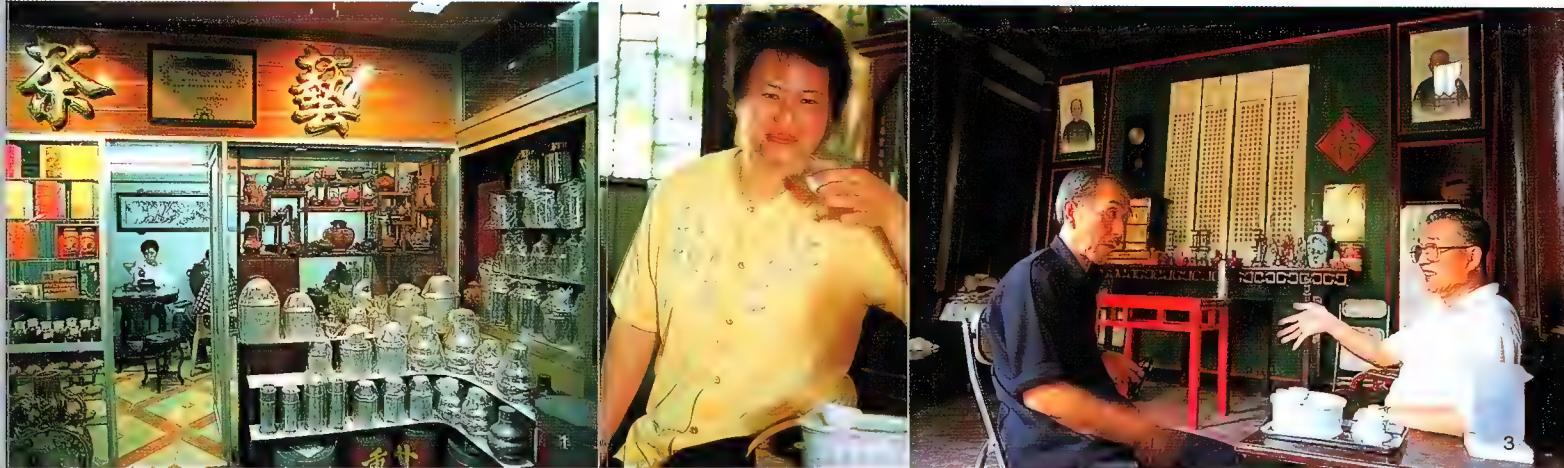
Second, boiling the water. Instead of coal, electricity or firewood, charcoal is used to fuel a small stove with a small kettle of water balanced on top.

Third, the choice of tea. Green tea, red tea and jasmine tea cannot do for the making of gongfu tea. The choice is limited to Wulong tea, semi-fermented, and baked dry, from east Guangdong and Fujian provinces. In Chaozhou, the brand Phoenix Tea, made from leaves picked from selected individual trees, is a local favourite. Wudong Village in the Phoenix Mountain is believed to produce the best Phoenix Tea, for the village is situated more than 1,000 metres above sea level and enveloped in clouds most of the year.

Fourth, the tea set. The cups for gongfu tea are small and made of fine, thin porcelain. The teapot is not big either, with a capacity that is barely enough to fill three or four tiny cups. The plate and receptacle are of an unusual sort, the former being perforated to allow surplus water to drain through the holes into the receptacle underneath.

Fifth, pouring the water. Before the tea is





Gongfu tea represents the Chinese tea ceremony, which involves a series of tea-making rules and the drinking etiquette.

prepared, the teapot and cups are heated by pouring piping hot water over them. When water is poured into the teapot, the kettle should be raised high to stir the tea leaves and bring out their aroma. When the brew is poured into the cups, however, the teapot should be kept close to the cups to minimise the loss of the fragrance contained in the tea. As the tea is poured, the ritual of "Lord Guan Inspecting His Barracks" is observed, that is, a circling movement over the cups to guarantee that the tea in each cup has the same shade of colour and density of aroma.

Sixth, drinking the tea. First lift the cup to your nose and sniff it, letting the fragrance infiltrate your nostrils and diffuse. Then lower the cup to your mouth and take a tiny sip, retain the tea in your mouth for a while so that it can flow and penetrate every taste bud, and you will be aware of its bitter taste turning into a delicate sweetness. While letting the tea trickle down your throat, smell the aroma that remains in the empty cup.

Among the folks of Chaozhou, the saying is that the tea ceremony is reserved for three people at a time whereas a bottle of wine should be shared among four drinkers. That is why the tea sets in Chaozhou always contain three cups, no less and no more.



Tips for the Traveller

Gongfu Tea Those interested in learning the gongfu tea ceremony may take courses fitting their schedules. Those with plenty of time may take a tour of the Phoenix Mountain or the Tiepu Tea Plantation sponsored by the China Travel Service in Chaozhou during which they can learn how to pick and process tea leaves (Contact person: Lin Zuomin, Tel: 2228899). Those simply interested in the gongfu tea ceremony may visit the Tea Ceremony Centre at 104 Huacheng Road West (Contact person: Chen Weizhong, Tel: 2259340).

1. The city of Chaozhou is studded with teahouses, and the Chinese tea ceremony is performed in some.
2. Even before taking a sip, the tea drinker is already drunk with the aroma emanating from the cup.
3. Tasting authentic gongfu tea in an old house
4. Phoenix Mountain, its peak forever enveloped in a thick pall of clouds, is an ideal place for tea trees to grow.



1. Salted cake, the most delectable of all the refreshments available in Chaozhou

2. Vegetarian snacks in this restaurant are both tasty and pleasing to the eye.

3. A pastry chef teaches his disciples in the restaurant of the Huqiao Tower

Lesson Two

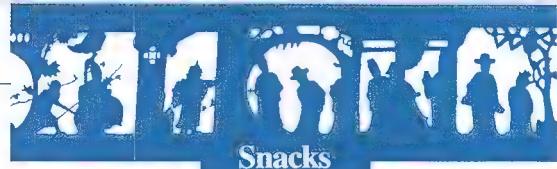
Snacks

The flair and talent of the Chaozhou people is shown in the wood and stone carvings that grace their courtyards, the porcelain ornamentation on the roof ridges and beams of their temples, their ancient opera costumes, and their Chaozhou-style embroidered bed curtains. The Chaozhou snacks, rich in variety, assiduously prepared, and exceptionally appetising, are additional evidence of the ingenuity of the local people.

Chaozhou has a mind-boggling variety of snacks. In olden times street vendors were often heard singing exaggerated verses about the menu that ran as long as 10,000 words.

Hurongquan Bakery is a venerable snack bar situated on Chaozhoucheng Street. The bakery now has divided into several subsidiary branches, each run by a son of the family. A typical example of the bakery is the rice dumplings which bear the strange name, "Mother Duck's Twists". Each of the four in a serving features a different kind of stuffing — sweetened bean paste in green and black, taro paste, and a mixture of wax gourd paste with some other ingredients. To differentiate the stuffing, the dumplings come in four shapes — pointed, non-pointed, round, and indented. The dumplings are boiled in sugar-laced soup, which is at times flavoured with





The Chaozhou snacks, assiduously prepared, are rich in variety and exceptionally appetising.

ginkgo, date, lily, longan, lotus seed, etc..

The snacks of Chaozhou are as numerous as the nails on an old-fashioned city gate. To cite a few of them: dumplings stuffed with shrimp and fish meat, pyramid-shaped dumplings of glutinous rice wrapped in reed or bamboo leaves, boiled oysters, bamboo shoots, deep-fried fruit, glutinous rice balls, beef balls, fish dumplings, bean-curd... The list goes on with the inclusion of various styles of cooked chicken, duck, goose and pork, pickles, steamed buns, cakes, noodles, congee, and more. This array of snacks is already impressive enough, without even mentioning the refreshments prepared for vegetarians.



Tips for the Traveller

Snacks Huqiao Tower, which belongs to the Chaozhou China Travel Service, has hired a team of pastry cooks who make a good selection of Chaozhou-style snacks of enticing aroma and taste. (Those who want to learn the secrets may contact Cai Shurong, manager of the dining room, Tel. 2228899).

1. Chaozhou pickles are perhaps unmatched anywhere in this world for their sheer variety.
2. Hurongquan Bakery, an age-old snack bar
3. Snacks at Hurongquan, fresh from the oven and ready to serve



Lesson Three

Ceramics

Fengxi Town, three kilometres from the old city of Chaozhou, is a ceramic production centre with a history of 1,000 years. Over the last few years porcelain kilns run by both the state and individuals have mushroomed so that the porcelain industry in Fengxi stands in comparison with Jingdezhen, the prestigious capital of the Chinese porcelain industry.

The ceramics industry was born in Fengxi to meet the demand of a populace whose unique dietary habits called for the use of a huge number of utensils. Fengxi porcelain is known for its fine designs and exquisite craftsmanship. The highway close to town is lined on both sides with nearly 100 porcelain shops, with workshops situated right behind them supplying a dazzling array of products. Each store has something different to offer. Works of art are a forte for the Fengxi school of porcelain. The finely crafted vases, plates, vats, figures, flowers, birds, insects, animals, cartoon characters, Buddha images, gods and fairies are all marked by superb reticulating skills.

In each workshop the visitor can learn something about the entire porcelain-making process, from kneading the clay, shaping it on a potter's wheel, engraving patterns on the wares with a small knife, glazing, pasting up



1. These crude pottery wares, crafted in an European style, are meant for export.
2. Designs of a ceramic expert
3. The potter's wheel never fails to hold the visitors mesmerised.



Fengxi, a town three kilometres from the old city of Chaozhou, is a ceramics producer with a history of 1,000 years.

ready-made designs, and filling the kiln. From a layman's point of view, every step looks fascinating in a special way.

These shops sell their wares at reasonable prices. For a little more than 10 yuan you can buy a teapot set with four cups. A reticulated vase of fine porcelain sells for a little more than 20 yuan. The various toys and animal sculptures sell for four to five yuan. If you want to practise the gongfu tea ceremony, you may choose a tea set for that purpose. Generally gongfu tea sets sell for around 50 yuan, but higher quality ones demand 100 yuan or more.

Shaping the clay is perhaps the most interesting step of the entire porcelain-making process. A chunk of clay is placed on a revolving wheel, and through the potter's clever hands, it quickly takes the shape of a utensil. All this seems so easy that visitors are inevitably tempted to try it themselves. No matter how ugly their product turns out, the experience never fails to hold them enthralled. After seven or eight tries, something more impressive is usually produced. 

Translated by Ling Yuan

Tips for the Traveller

Ceramics The Ceramics Study Institute in Fengxi receives visitors who are interested in learning how to make ceramics. The tourist can visit the sample display room and make a piece of ceramic work under guidance (Contact person: Chen Shimin, Tel: 6883370).



Transport: Hong Kong-Chaozhou: An express bus starts from the Hong Kong Coliseum at 8:00 a.m. every day and arrives at Chaozhou at 4:00 p.m. Tickets: HK\$300 for a one-way ticket; available at various branches of the Hong Kong China Travel Service and the Guangdong-Hong Kong Travel Service.

Chaozhou-Hong Kong: An express bus sets off from Huajiao Tower of Chaozhou at 8:00 a.m. every day. Tickets: 270 yuan, available in the Huajiao Tower lobby.

Hotel: Huajiao Tower is at 34 Huacheng Road West, Chaozhou. Tel.: (768)-2228899 (lobby). Room rate: During the May-July period, 130 yuan per standard room for tourist groups renting upwards of five rooms, 220 yuan per standard room for those renting fewer than five rooms.

1. Porcelain flowers made in Fengxi
2. Works of art are the forte of the Fengxi school of porcelain.
3. Unaffected simplicity is a salient feature of this earthenware workshop.
4. Huajiao Tower, conveniently located in the city centre, is an ideal place to stay.

位於昆明市中心的昆明飯店是雲南省首家四星級涉外旅遊飯店，有着十分優越的地理位置，距機場僅5里。在飯店歐陸風格的主樓裡，齊備了一流的設備設施和良好的服務水準，並擁有雲南高星級酒店中最大的庭院和停車場。當您進入昆明飯店，您的每一個需求都將得到留意和盡心的幫助。飯店擁有標準客房、豪華套房、行政套房、總統套房共400多間；不同風格的中西餐廳、宴會廳、多功能餐廳18個，同時擁有漢莎啤酒坊、佳寧娜潮州菜餐廳、豪勝娛樂城等各具特色的飲食、娛樂場所十餘處，設有購物中心、商務中心、郵政、銀行、汽車服務以及同聲傳譯會議廳，並可在您享用民族風味餐的同時伴以民族歌舞表演，為您提供一個浪漫溫馨的飲食氛圍。飯店以「賓客至上」為宗旨，竭誠歡迎您的到來！

Right in the city's central region, which is regarded as the golden area for business and commerce, stands there the international four-star hotel - Kunming Hotel, proud of her European style for her deluxe interior decorations, large gardens and courts. No matter for her location in the heart of the city, to your happy surprise, the transportation to the airport or the train station from the hotel only takes 15 minutes for the former or 10 minutes for the latter. With more than 400 standard twin rooms, suites and presidential suites, the hotel is equipped with a grand banquet hall and several restaurants serving both Chinese and western cuisines. You can find first-class service on her shopping arcades, business centre, post office, bank, recreation centre, beauty saloon/hairdresser's and night club. With a history as long as 38 years since her grand opening, the hotel is now modernized with computer system for the administration for the whole house, hence thousands of VIP delegations and tour groups both from home and abroad have visited and stayed with us, and left high praises and much satisfactions. Striking for higher standard for our service, Kunming Hotel with her thousand staff are longing for your visit.



昆明飯店
KUNMING HOTEL



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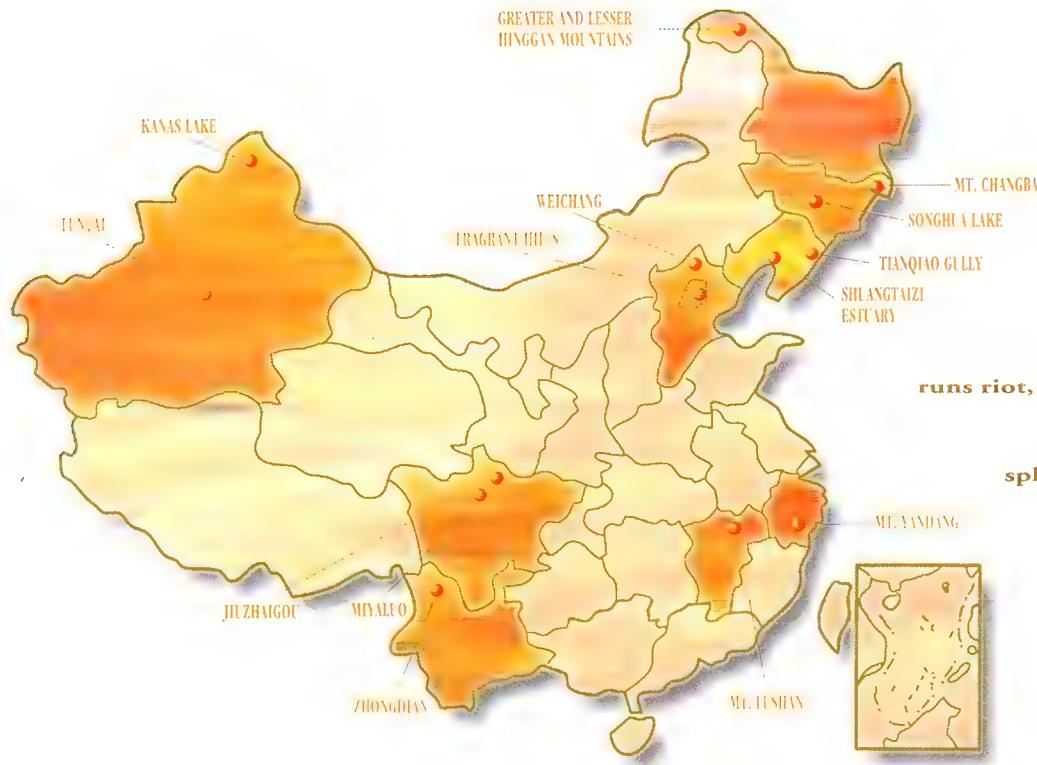
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Autumn begins to descend on the vast land of China in September. It is the time of the year when Mother Nature, wielding a huge invisible brush, runs riot, splashing the scenery in a wealth of colours. To marvel at the splendid glory of autumn, however, you should make sure you choose a place where the autumn scenery is the most distinctive. The following is a brief introduction to possible destinations.

WHERE TO GO IN MULTI-HUED AUTUMM

SONGHUA LAKE

In the city of Jilin in Jilin Province. **Best time to go:** Late September-early October. **Features:** The Songhua Lake is bordered on both sides with a variety of broadleaf trees, providing autumn leaves in multiple hues. The island on the lake is more enchanting in its autumn glory, and boating proves a most relaxing experience. **Transport:** Fly to Changchun and take the train or bus to the city of Jilin. There are special bus routes to the lake. **Accommodation:** In autumn the number of visitors to the Songhua Lake diminishes considerably and so, most hotels, mountain villas and guesthouses are closed. The exception is the Songhuahu Hotel, which is centrally located. The hotel restaurant's forte is fish, freshly caught from the lake. **Tips:** In autumn the lake is prone to high winds, so bring along warm clothes.

Songhua Lake, Jilin (by Shan Xiaogang)



TIANQIAO GULLY

A newly opened zone for viewing red leaves, situated in Kuandian County near Dandong, Liaoning Province.

Best time to go: Early October.

Features: The beauty of the Tianqiao Gully State Forest Park lies in its crimson maple leaves. Still in an early stage of development, the natural environment there is largely intact.

Transport: Fly to Shenyang and take the train or bus to Kuandian, then a special minibus to Tianqiao Gully State Forest Park.

Accommodation: Tianqiao Hotel, situated in the centre of the zone. Mountain delicacies

and game abound. **Tips:** An ideal place for photographers and painters. The climate is warm and rainy.



Tianqiao Gully, Liaoning (by Shan Xiaogang)



A larch forest in the Greater Hinggan Mountains

GREATER AND LESSER HINGGAN MOUNTAINS

In Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia. **Best time to go:** Middle September.

Features: The Greater and Lesser Hinggan Mountains are known as the native land of deciduous trees. Seventy-percent are larches, while white birch trees account for 14 percent; brownish red and gold are the main autumn colours.

Transport: Fly to Harbin and take No. 213 tourist train to Jagdaqi. You then take the No. 671 train across the wooded area of the Greater Hinggan Mountains. Disembark at major terminals and ride into the depths of the forest. Or take a train from Harbin to Langxiang or Taoshan, and then switch to a bus for a ride to the forest area. Or, if you are a photography buff, you can rent a cross-country jeep for about 400 yuan per

day. **Accommodation:** There are hotels or guesthouses in the various forestry bureaux along the way. **Tips:** It snows heavily anytime during autumn, so be sure to bring warm clothing.

CHANGBAI MOUNTAIN

On the border between Jilin Province and the People's

Democratic Republic of Korea. **Best time to go:** Late September. **Features:**

When winter has already descended on the mountain peaks the world below is covered with brilliant autumn colours — golden birches and crimson maples.

Transport: Fly to Changchun and take the train to Erdaobaihe, where minibuses wait to take you to the top of the mountain. The Hot Spring Zone and the Waterfall Zone are within walking distance. **Accommodation:** At the foot of the Changbai Mountain there are many mountain villas; restaurants offer a good variety of Korean dishes. **Tips:** There is a 10-degree temperature variance

between the foot and top of the mountain.



Changbai Mountain, Jilin (by Quan Changzhi)

LUNTAI

In Korla, southern Xinjiang.
Best time to go: Early to middle October. **Features:** The lower reaches of the Tarim River are flanked by primitive poplar trees which stand tall and straight, and turn a splendid yellow in autumn. **Transport:** Fly or ride a bus from Ürümqi to Korla. Then rent a jeep to go over the bridge on the Tarim River by the Desert Highway, proceeding east along the river for several dozen kilometres. **Accommodation:** There is no hotel in the forest park. Bring your own food, drinking water, and a tent, or return to Luntai the same day. **Tips:** Beware of mosquitoes and insects.



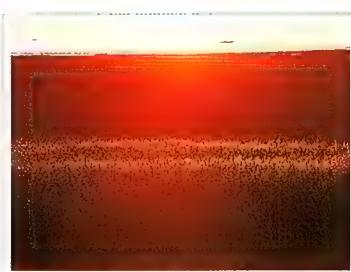
Luntai, Xinjiang (by Song Shijing)

SHUANGTAIZI RIVER ESTUARY

On the seashore in Panjin, Liaoning.

Best time to go: October-November.

Features: At the Shuangtaizi River Estuary a kind of translucent algae begins to grow in June, turns a deep red in October, and looks magnificent as it covers the land like a red carpet, which contrasts wonderfully with the blue sea and the golden reed groves. **Transport:** There are buses shuttling between Shenyang and Panjin. A bus ride between the two takes about four hours. **Accommodation:** Shentan Pavilion is situated right on the beach, but you'd better bring food and water, or stay in Panjin. **Tips:** It is rather warm, and autumn clothing is sufficient.

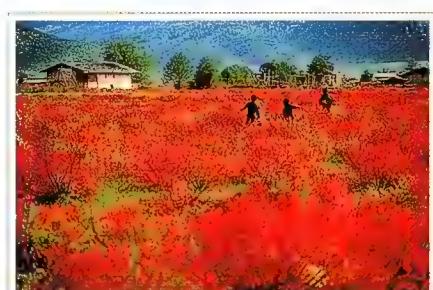


ZHONGDIAN

In the Dêqên Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province.

Best time to go: Middle-late August. **Features:**

When the leaves of black henbane turn brilliantly red, the Tibetan villages, surrounded by the red waves, look especially tranquil in their settled repose. **Transport:** Fly from Kunming to Lijiang, and take the long-distance bus to Zhongdian. To rediscover the glory of autumn in the fields, you'd better rent a vehicle. **Accommodation:** There are hotels and guesthouses as well as restaurants serving Yunnan and Sichuan dishes in the county seat of Zhongdian. **Tips:** The area is more than 3,000 metres above sea level. Make sure you take preventative measures against alpine syndrome, and the strong ultraviolet rays.

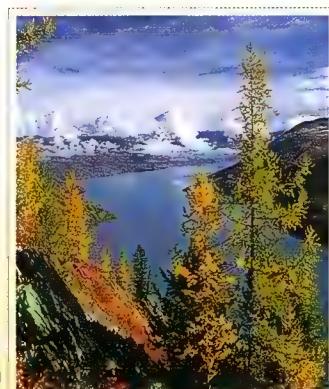


Zhongdian, Yunnan (by Wong Miao)

KANAS LAKE

In Altay Prefecture in the border area of northern Xinjiang. **Best time to go:** Middle-late September.

Features: Clear water, striking mountains, and autumn scenery combine to turn Kanas Lake into an ideal tourist attraction. The mountain forests are a mixture of colours: brownish red larch leaves, golden birch leaves, and green dragon spruce. The colours are reflected in the lake's surface, gelling them together. The way from Altay to the lake is full of charming autumn scenes. **Transport:** Fly from Ürümqi to Altay and then switch to a bus which will take you to Kanas Lake. **Tips:** The climate in this area is similar to that of the Greater Hinggan Mountains. It can snow anytime in the depth of autumn, so take your winter clothing just in case.



Kanas Lake, Xinjiang
(by Song Shijing)



Yandang Mountain, Zhejiang (by Shangguan Zhonghua)

FRAGRANT HILLS

In the western suburbs of Beijing.

Best time to go: Middle-late October.

Features: In late autumn the entire hill is covered with the red leaves of smoke trees. Against the sunshine the leaves look so transparent that even the minute veins in them are visible.



The Fragrant Hills, Beijing (by Deng Linlie)

Transport: The Fragrant Hills are only 20 kilometres from downtown Beijing, and can be reached by public buses which start from the Zoo.

Accommodation: Xiangshan Hotel provides all imaginable amenities. There are ordinary guesthouses too. **Tips:** Be careful not to get lost in the maze of footpaths that cover the entire hill.

YANDANG MOUNTAIN

In Leqing County, southern Zhejiang Province. **Best time to**

go: Early November. **Features:** The Yandang Mountain is a topographical mess, with peaks assuming all manner of exotic images, and the forests explode into a plateau of bright colours.

Transport: Fly to Wenzhou, then take a one-hour ride by minibus.

Accommodation: The mountain is clustered with hotels and guesthouses. Seafood and mountain delicacies are available in local restaurants. **Tips:** Because the scenic spots are widely scattered, hailing a tricycle maximises your time and energy.

JIUZHAI GOU AND MIYALUO

In Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province.

Best time to go: Middle October. **Features:** Primeval woods with frost-beaten leaves in both solemn and bright colours are set off by equally attractive lakes, ponds, waterfalls and streams. The natural environment remains largely intact at Miyaluo. **Transport:** Fly to Chengdu and take a bus to Jiuzhaigou. **Accommodation:** Complete tourist facilities at both Jiuzhaigou and Miyaluo. **Tips:** There is a big temperature difference between day and night.



Jiuzhaigou, Sichuan (by Gao Yuan)



Weichang, Hebei (by Zhang Mingji)

WEICHANG

In Weichang County, Hebei Province. **Best time to go:** Middle-late September. **Features:** Grassland mingles with mountain

woods in a gentle rolling country. Most of the trees there are white birch, with oak trees coming next. Autumn scenery here is mainly yellow and brownish red. A century ago it used to be an imperial hunting ground. **Transport:** A bus leaves Beijing's Maquan Long-distance Bus Station daily at 7:00 a.m., arriving at Weichang at 5:00 p.m. Train No. 257 leaves Beijing North Station for Tongliao at 7:00 p.m. and arrives at Siheyong Town at 3:00 a.m., from where minibuses go to Weichang. **Accommodation:** Weichang Hotel. **Tips:** It snows in late September in Weichang, situated 1,500-2,000 metres above sea level.

MOUNT LUSHAN

In the city of Jiujiang, Jiangxi Province. **Best time to go:** Late October-early November. **Features:** There are a good variety of trees on Mount Lushan, where the mixture of coniferous and broadleaf trees brings forth a riot of colour against the rich verdure of pine trees. The maple leaves in the Lushan Botanical Garden are even more splendid in their fiery redness. **Transport:** Go to Nanchang or Jiujiang by air or by train, and then take the special bus to Guling Street on Mount Lushan. Minibuses and taxis are available for those who want to tour around the mountain. **Accommodation:** There are all standards of hotels and restaurants on the mountain. Many sanatoriums are also open to visitors. Jiangxi cuisine is served in Food Street. **Tips:** It is cool up the mountain. Be careful when the mountain is enshrouded in mist.

Mt. Lushan, Jiangxi (by Yin Xixiang)



Translated by Ling Yuan



Editor's Note: Our correspondent's article in issue No. 206, Chasing Autumn in Northeast China, aroused such an intense desire in two Hong Kong women that they immediately hit the road in search of the autumn magic. The journey brought them from Hong Kong to Harbin, Jagdaqi, and Mohe, and from Yabuli to Mudanjiang and the Jingpo Lake. Along the way autumn remained their faithful companion.

RECAPTURING AUTUMM IN THE NORTH

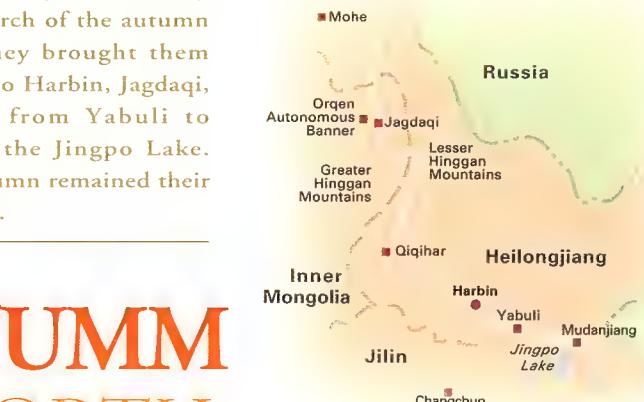
Photos & article by
Lee Lai Chu, Lin Shuk Ying

One day last year, we were leafing through issue No. 206 of China Tourism. The story about chasing autumn caught our attention, and we were impressed by the photographs, which captured autumn in its full, multiple-hued glory. This gave us the inspiration to start our own chase for autumn in that part of the world.

Pressed for time, we had to limit our journey to one of the three Northeast provinces, Heilongjiang. Lacking information, and worried about our time schedule, we turned to Hong Kong China Tourism Press for advice. The editor responded by bombarding us with information on the province and introduced us to Mr. Liu Xiangyang, the magazine's correspondent in Harbin, who offered to meet us at the airport and volunteered to take care of booking train tickets and hotel rooms and designing the itinerary.

September 24. In the afternoon, we embarked on our journey on impatient legs. When we arrived in Harbin at 10:00 p.m., Liu was already waiting there with his two friends. During the one-hour ride from the airport to downtown, Liu and Wang gave us a rundown on the "North Pole" Village in Mohe and Harbin. Liu had already purchased train tickets to Jagdaqi for the next day. Then the five of us found a restaurant for a nice chat and a hot-pot mutton and frozen bean-curd supper.

September 25. At noon, we had lunch at a nearby snack bar



September 26. At 8:00 a.m., we reached Jagdaqi. The weather here was colder than in Harbin. I did what Liu Xiangyang told me, holding the book Heilongjiang '97 Special Tours in my hand as I disembarked from the train. Zou Xiangdong, waiting at the railway station, immediately recognised us by the book. He arranged the hotel for us and served as our guide for a day. Our tour began from Yalihe Town, with Ms. Li serving as our driver.

The tiny city of Jagdaqi is a major settlement in the Greater Hinggan Mountains. There are no tall buildings, and the local people live a simple life. After a visit to the local museum of the history and folklore of the ethnic Orgen people, we went to Gaxian Cave, where the emperor of the Northern Wei Dynasty inscribed a stone tablet during a sacrificial ceremony to his ancestors 1,500 years ago. We also marvelled at the stone dwellings of the ancient Xianbei (Sienpi) people. Zou, a tourist guide by profession, talked a blue streak about the Greater Hinggan Mountains. The mountains around the Gaxian Cave were heavily wooded, and golden leaves sparkled against a sky filled with cottony clouds.

After lunch, we visited the clean, beautiful and tranquil Holiday Village, and then returned to our hotel.

September 27. At 6:00 a.m., Li and her husband, Liu Shaocai, drove us to Mohe by way of Huzhong and Tuqiang in the

THE AUTUMN WIND RISES. WITHERED LEAVES, HAVING SHAKEN THEMSELVES FREE FROM THEIR BOUGHS, CIRCLE SOFTLY TO THE GROUND. THERE IS SOMETHING SOLEMN AND POETIC ABOUT THIS IMAGE.

known for its thin cakes served with meat and vegetable dishes. The dexterity with which the local diners wrapped the meat and vegetable in the cakes immediately put us to shame.

We boarded the train to the north in the evening. It was many years since I last rode a train with hard sleepers. This time the wagons were much cleaner and tidier, and the attitudes of the conductors were not as harsh as I remembered.

Greater Hinggan Mountains. Along the way we saw many tiny villages in the woods. It was late autumn, and golden leaves





were hanging on treetops. Every now and then a truck loaded with timber drove by.

By the time we arrived at Tuqiang, golden trees had given way to grey and bald tiny trees that were scattered here and there in a rather desolate way. Liu told us this

was the aftermath of the major fire that had ravaged the Greater Hinggan Mountains in 1987.

We reached Mohe at 2:00 p.m. and immediately visited the May 6th Museum. Beginning on May 6, 1987, the forest fire here burned for 28 days. The museum, through a display of photographs and pictures, told of how the local government organised the campaign against the fire, and how the local people rebuilt their homes.

September 28. We got together at 6:00 a.m. and found our car coated by a thin layer of ice. We drove north towards the North Pole Village of Mohe. Two hours later we arrived at Yanzhi (Rouge) Gully, which derived its name from the legend that Empress Dowager Cixi once traded with the Russians, giving them a gold brick found in the gully in return for rouge. It is said that a gold-mining ship here can mine three kilograms of gold every day. By the time we entered the

the Lius, a warm-hearted and sincere couple.

September 30. We returned to Harbin in the morning. Acting on a suggestion of our new friends there, we rented a car for a three-day tour of Mudanjiang.

October 1. At 6:00 a.m., we set off with two new companions who were cousins. Zhao served as the driver and Huang our guide. Two hours later we arrived at the Yabuli Ski Ground, where we embarked on a cable-car and spent an entire hour marvelling an aerial view of a mountain cocooned in a carpet of trees whose autumn leaves had long dyed crimson. We arrived at the city of Mudanjiang before dusk fell.

October 2. In the morning we set off for the Jingpo Lake. The drive was bumpy, the road being in a state of disrepair, but we managed to travel around the lake, and in the two hours we shot many pictures from different perspectives. The only pity was that the sun here was not as bright as it had been in the Greater Hinggan Mountains and there was neither blue sky nor white clouds to beautify the scenery.

October 3. We began our journey back to Harbin at 5:30 p.m. The temperature plummeted to -2°C. It was noon by the time we arrived in Harbin, where we checked into the Power Hotel. We took a walk along Dazhi Street East and went into a Sichuan restaurant for hot-pot mutton.

THE FALLEN LEAVES CRUNCH BENEATH THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE TRAVELLER WHO WALKS DOWN A WINDING NARROW PATH, UNAWARE OF WHERE IT LEADS.

North Pole Village, it was already past 9:00 a.m., but the village was still enshrouded in a thick pall of mist. Through the mist we caught sight of a dozen or so one-storied buildings. The Heilongjiang River was faintly visible in the distance, and we could just make out a boat.

We found a restaurant run by someone from Shanghai, where we chose a fish caught from the river two feet in length and about two kilograms in weight, and ordered some side dishes. We found the fish tasty but Liu disagreed. He complained that it was not well done.

After lunch the sun appeared. We climbed atop a beacon tower at the entrance to Mohe, which provided a view of the one-storied houses in Russia. Through the binoculars we spotted some horse-drawn carriages and pedestrians. Winter is long and very cold here; the temperature can plunge as low as -45°C. It begins to turn cold and snow in the beginning of October, and the snow won't begin to thaw until May the following year.

We drove towards the Luogu River. By the time we arrived at Luogu Village it was already 6:00 p.m. and dusk was already gathering. So we turned back without visiting the village. Later we regretted to learn that we had been only five minutes away the source of the Heilongjiang River and a tiny "village" of five inhabitants.

September 29. Just after 5:00 a.m., we returned to Jagdaqi. After supper, Zou Xiangdong and the Lius drove us to the railway station. We felt reluctant to leave the Greater Hinggan Mountains and

The proprietress and waiters there showed an intense interest in us.

October 4. We went browsing in a local underground garment wholesale centre. It was thronged with people.

Many foreigners, Russians in particular, were attracted to a trade fair close to the Children's Park, where the commodities were mostly soldier's utilities and antiques. We went there, hoping to buy some military wristwatches of the former Soviet Union.

Despite the fact that we had been a little late for the season, and the journey was not as impressive as we had expected, we were nevertheless deeply touched by the coldness of autumn in the Northeast and even more so by the warmth and frankness of the Northeasterners. 

Translated by Ling Yuan

1. Enjoying the fish caught from Heilongjiang River at Mohe
2. The golden leaves had begun to wither in the Greater Hinggan Mountains.
3. A larch forest in Mohe
4. Glittering autumn leaves on the Songhua Lake Island (by Shan Xiaogang)







"The ancient city of Pingyao is an outstanding example of cities built by Han Chinese in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911). The ancient city of Pingyao has retained all its unique characteristics; moreover, it has displayed to people a complete picture of unusual cultural, social, economic and religious development in Chinese history." This is the comment made by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at a meeting held at Naples, Italy, on December 3, 1997. At this meeting, Pingyao was added to the list of cultural heritage sites in the world.

Today, most of China's historical and cultural cities have developed into modern metropolises and gradually lost their original features. Even three of the four most famous ancient cities, namely, Xi'an, Xingcheng and Jingzhou, have turned into cement jungles and are permeated with a noisy, annoying, chaotic and restless atmosphere. Nothing has been spared in this march towards modernity — not even a complete city wall (look at Xi'an). The only exception is the ancient city of Pingyao in Shanxi Province. It has retained its original outlook from the Ming and Qing dynasties; and the local people still maintain their former traditions.

A century ago Shanxi was the wealthiest province in the country, an honour it held for some time. Even at the beginning of this century, it was still the country's monetary centre. Pingyao, located in the heart of this once most prosperous province, was known far and wide as a famous business and financial centre in China in the period from the late Ming Dynasty to the early Qing Dynasty.

Pingyao: Remnant of a Bygone Century

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

60 鵝哥巷

祥光似拱

98美术
书法
培训
招生



The 'Tortoise City' Survives

After Taiyuan, our train sped on the southern Datong-Fenglingdu Railway. Through the window I saw on the horizon of the plain a city wall pop up, on top of which stood a tower. I had arrived at the ancient city of Pingyao.

I took a tricycle to Fengyi Gate and climbed up to the top of the city wall over a dozen metres high. Outside the city wall many modern buildings had been built, but within the wall grey-coloured traditional civilian houses stretched east as far as the eye could see. Red lanterns hung from the tower on the wall, and various weapons, such as spears and halberds, were neatly arranged on their racks. Iron guns pointed out from the crenels, and along the barbican entrance to the city were rolling logs and rocks, ready to be released to hold back an enemy attack. The flags cracked and spluttered in the strong wind.

Pingyao used to be known as the "Tortoise City" because its layout resembles a tortoise. The city was designed in this way because it was believed that when "tortoise plays in water, and the mountain and water both

face the sun," there would be longevity and good fortune. There are six gates around the city: the southern gate represents the tortoise's head and the two wells on either side are taken as the two eyes. The north gate stands for the tail, while the other four gates on the east and west sides symbolise the four legs.

There are 72 battlements and 3,000 crenels on top of the walls encircling the city, representing respectively Confucius' disciples of virtue and the total of his students. Kuixing Tower was built to represent Zi Lu, one of his disciples, who advocated military might.

The "Tortoise City" does indeed enjoy longevity. Over the past half a century, it twice survived in the face of destruction. In 1977 when there was a serious flood, seen only once a century in this part of the country, the ancient city walls of stone and brick stood firm against the raging flood water, ensuring the safety of the 40,000 residents and their properties. The second threat came not from nature, but from urban development. Incredibly, in the early 1980s, the authorities of Pingyao mapped out a plan to have the city rebuilt. Shocked by the news, Yuan Yisan, a professor at Tongji University in Shanghai, called other scholars to sign a petition, appealing for the higher authorities to stop it. They finally succeeded and the old city was saved.

Strolling over the city walls early in the morning, I saw how the local people start their day. Young students in groups were riding to school by bicycle; some old people passed by on sedans; martial art lovers exercised in neat formations; and beneath the newly rebuilt tower of the north gate, a great number of older people practised Taiji (shadow boxing) exercises in slow motion.



Ancient Streets



Previous page:
1. A bird's-eye view of Pingyao
2. Impregnable defence (by Shi Zhiqiang)
3. The barbican entrance of the city, with defensive attributes (by: Shi Zhiqiang)
4. The magnificent ancient city of Pingyao (by Shi Zhiqiang)

This page:
1. The Yingge (Parrot) Lane
2. Nandajie (South Street) turns into the "Ming-Qing Street" with an air of antiquity.
3. An ancient tower on an old street
4. The newly rebuilt Northern-gate Tower

(Photos are by Shan Xiaogang except noted otherwise.)



The Original Layout Remains

With the Nandajie (South Street) as the axis and the Shilou (Market Tower) as the central point, the city fans out according to the set rules for city construction in the Ming and Qing dynasties. As such, altars to ancestors are on the left and temples to the gods of earth and grain are on the right, the Confucius Temple is in the north part and the Temple to the God of War (Guan Yu) is in the south. All these buildings, in addition to the county government house, are the original structures.

Unlike most other cities, whose main north-south and east-west streets usually form a cross, Pingyao's major east-west street forms two separated "T" with the main north-south street. This was done on purpose. According to an old saying, the head and tail of a tortoise should not be in a straight line, otherwise it foretells bad luck.

The most conspicuous sight in Pingyao is the Market Tower built during the Kangxi reign in the Qing Dynasty. With three tiers of eaves and a glazed tile top, it stands astride South Street. In the old days, the market in Pingyao

1. The shop of Changshengyuan
2. Where the Empress Dowager Cixi tasted the yellow wine
3. The short-legged table and other objects once belonging to the general manager of the Rishengchang
4. The signboard formerly used by Rishengchang
5. Rishengchang, the first and most famous draft bank in Pingyao



opened three times a day: morning, noon and evening.

The major streets in the city are all lined with ancient buildings in the style of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The streets are crowded and bustle with activity. Yet in the small lanes you find a secluded and quiet scene. A long history has left them with many moving stories and legends. Taking me around one street corner after another, my tricycle driver kept telling me the names and background of each lane: Shenglin Lane, where the Empress Dowager Cixi once stayed; Song Menghuai Lane, the native home of a successful candidate of imperial examinations in the Qing Dynasty; Miliangshi Lane, where cereal grain was traded, as its name denotes...

Rishengchang — 'Grandfather' of Modern Banks



Shanxi merchants, who rose to prominence during the Ming Dynasty, developed into a monopolising force throughout the country. The Shanxi merchants were so rich that half of the tax collected by the Qing court came from them, and they even monopolised the supply of military provisions and the raw materials used in government mintage. This, to a great part, was owing to the rise of draft banks established in Shanxi, with the





Rishengchang Money Exchange established in the third year of the Daoguang reign of the Qing Dynasty as the most influential.

Rishengchang, a mansion with five large rooms does not look particularly magnificent today, but it has an imposing air all the same. The general office of the famous Rishengchang Money Exchange Shop once had branches throughout the country.

In every sense, this kind of money exchange shops can be considered the "rural grandfather" of modern banks. They earned profits from providing remittance and cash services to businessmen. But how could the banks cash the drafts or bills of exchange in large sums of silver without mistake? It so happened that watermarks began to be used at that time. On every exchange note issued by Rishengchang there was the character of *chang*, only vaguely discernible. Backed by a series of anti-forgery numerical codes, it would have been very difficult to forge.

There are many things of interest. For instance, the underground vault, known as "silver cave", large enough to hold several dozen thousand taels of silver, is situated under the general manager's earthen bed. Also worth noting is the Chinese classic *The Mirror for Government* laid on the short-legged table in the general manager's bed.

The success of Rishengchang set an example for other merchants. In a short time, nine more money

exchange shops emerged in the city. Commerce quickly flourished in Pingyao, earning it the names of "Commercial Capital" and "Centre of Finance".

Serious About Building Houses

An old saying goes as "People in Shanxi like to build houses, while people in Henan like to wear silk clothes." If this was true, residents of Pingyao could be considered the most typical of Shanxi people.

It was natural that those Pingyao people who got rich would desire fancy residential housing so as to make themselves appear prominent to their native folks. The neat, well preserved ancient houses in Pingyao reflect the living conditions of the local people in the bygone days.

The local residents pay great attention to their gate towers, which they take as the representative of their social status and financial situation. Deep in the Shaxiang Lane two arched gates stand side by side by the courtyard known as "Houzhifu" (literally "Prefect Hou"). Hou Dingyuan and Hou Chengyuan, the former owners of the courtyard, served as prefect of Kaifeng and alternative prefect of Bianliang (another name for Kaifeng) at different times. Their grandfather, Hou Wangbin, once served as manager of Tianchengheng, one of the money exchange shops in the city.



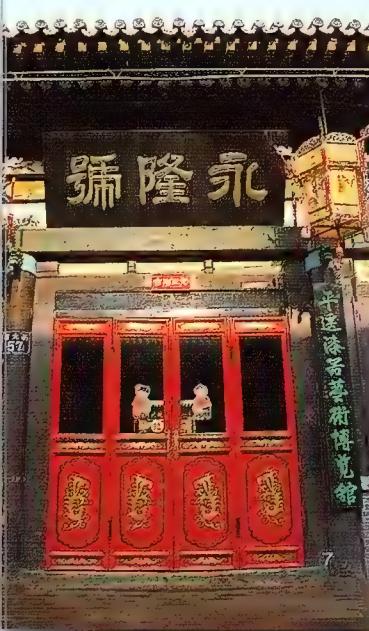
Original Shops

6. The magnificent office of Baichuantong, one of the 10 Qing-dynasty draft banks

7. Yonglong Shop is now the Pingyao Lacquer Art Museum

8. Changshengyuan, the famous yellow wine and pastry shop

9. A restaurant serving traditional local delicacies





The principal building is the most important part of a Pingyao mansion. It is for the senior members of the family, usually featuring richly carved doors and front corridors, decorated in a way that appears both solemn and elegant, leaving people with the impression of excessive extravagance. Yet this also reflects the traditional virtue of respecting the old.

Apart from the traditional requirements of geomancy, the Pingyao people also pay particular attention to other unique features in the design of their courtyards. For instance, the houses are arranged on different layers, with the principal room occupying the highest point. There is a saying for this: "Low in front and high at the back, succeeding generations enjoy better fortune." The high back walls of the mansion functions to protection against theft, as well as to let rain water flow into the courtyards, with the underlying concept that "Good fortune should not leak".

Competing for Height

In many mansions, the wing houses on the east and west sides, as well as the south-side rooms are also two- or three-storey buildings. These types of quadrangles are locally called *louyuan* (meaning courtyards surrounded by two-or-three-storey buildings). However, overdoing this sometimes caused trouble.

At the back of the county guesthouse is such a *louyuan* called Sanhedou, which is on an extremely grand scale. It was formerly the west-wing courtyard of the mansion of Hou Dianyuan, manager of Rishengchang. Taking advantage of his enormous wealth, he built this courtyard with seven principal rooms, in violation of the set rules. The county magistrate discovered this, and Hou nearly lost his life. Although he escaped the death penalty, he was stripped of his great wealth and the family's grand mansion had to be sold.

Geomantic towers are also unique to Pingyao. In order to ensure that their houses are favourably sited in terms of geomancy, the Pingyao people, who by nature like to compete with one another, often add geomantic towers in the shape of a screen wall, a temple, or a maiden chamber, on top of the houses to make them look extraordinary. Even the poorest families would pile up a few more bricks over the ridge of their roofs to make their own houses higher than those of their neighbours.

Traditional Arts

Roaming around the ancient city of Pingyao, I came across stone, brick and



1. A wooden horse-drawn cart from the Qing Dynasty
2. A scale for weighing silver
3. The reception room of Rishengchang
4. A mural on the walls surrounding the brick bed from the Ming Dynasty



wooden carvings everywhere — in cultural relics, old temples and traditional residential houses as well as modern buildings.

It is believed that one day Mu Fucheng, a clay sculptor in the late Qing Dynasty, made a figure of Lei Lutai, the general manager of the Rishengchang Money Exchange Shop. He placed it on the counter and demanded Lei buy it at a high price. As the clay figure was so vivid and lifelike, Lei had to buy it. Mu Fucheng also had the unique ability to make clay figurines with his hands hidden in his sleeves. He often displayed the skill at temple fairs, and people would queue for some time to buy his products.



There is another traditional folk art in Pingyao called *Shage Xiren* (Opera Figures Behind Gauze Screen). The figures, made with straw, paper and other materials, are put in wooden boxes about 65 centimetres high. Each box holds the figures of an opera story, and the folk artists would sing from behind the boxes. One such group of figures that can still be seen — the only figures that have been kept from the period — were made by a local artist, Xu Liting, for the local Lantern Festival Temple Fair in the 23rd year of the Guangxu reign of the Qing Dynasty.

Polished lacquer ware is a famous product of Pingyao. Originating in the Kaiyuan years of the Tang Dynasty (628-907), the art has a history of more than 1,200 years. The key production process involves dipping your hands in a mixture of blue brick powder, water, sesame oil and soybean oil and repeatedly polishing the surface with a piece of cloth or silk until the surface shines.

Prosperous Ming-Qing Street

A visit to South Street gave me a real surprise. The sheer number of antique shops confirms the saying that "There are antiques everywhere in Pingyao." The treasures left over by Pingyao merchants are many, ranging from brush washers, foldable account books, cricket jars, paintings of beautiful women, skullcaps and water pipes to official hats with buttons showing rank and a vast picture of



Emperor Kangxi.

Baichuantong was one of Pingyao's 10 major money exchange shops and its office looks more impressive than that of Rishengchang. On its original site, He Zhiliang, a man just over 40, has established Pingyao's first museum of furniture once used by the rich. Most of the exhibits are in the styles of the Ming and Qing dynasties, and they range from beds to clothes stands.

One of the old shops which has kept on doing business in the traditional way is the Changshengyuan Yellow Wine and Pastry Shop situated to the south of the Market Tower. Its boss now is its sixth-generation successor, Guo Huairen. The shop does business in the front, while the workshop produces the wine and cookies at the rear. Each day the shop makes a fixed amount of yellow wine in the traditional way. Since a TV programme added further to the shop's popularity, the small shop has become the most crowded place in the Ming-Qing Street.

Almost opposite Changshengyuan is a restaurant offering traditional Pingyao dishes. As soon as I entered the restaurant, a waitress in Qing-style costume immediately came up to me. The menu offered the famous Pingyao beef, *wantuoze*, a local dish much liked by the Empress Dowager Cixi, and wheaten foods cooked in several dozen different ways. I picked a few whose names sounded interesting, which I enjoyed greatly.

Peaceful Life in Small Courtyards

In Pingyao, the major streets are wide and prosperous, while the web-like small lanes are deep and quiet. Every



Cultural Relics

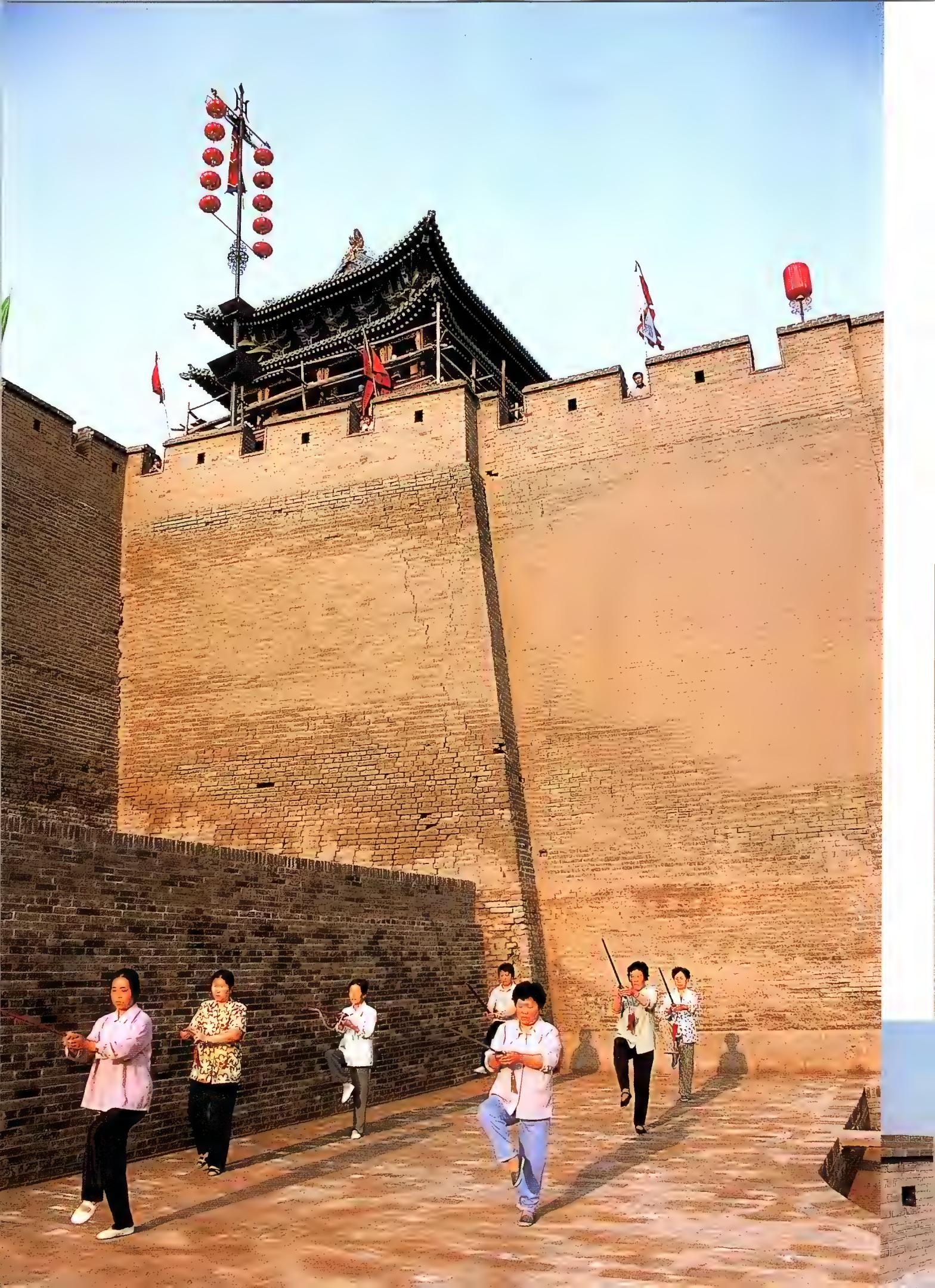


5. A painted wooden screen exhibited in the Museum of Furniture of the Rich

6. Exquisite relics from the Qing Dynasty

7. Old trunks and cupboards to hold money

8. The portrait of Emperor Kangxi in an antique shop





morning, people pour out of the courtyards. The sound of bicycle bells and motorbike and car horns mix with the yelling of the milkmen and soy sauce peddlers and the laughter of school children, injecting life into the old city. No sooner have the small lanes gone quiet than there comes the clatter of horse's hoofs — horse-drawn carts have entered the city to deliver goods or take away the night soil. Old farmers push one-wheeled carts from one lane to another, selling vegetables, while vendors play their instruments competing for the attention of the residents. In front of their courtyard gates, old grannies bargain with the vendors, while taking care of their grandchildren...

Although the civilisation of modern society is progressing rapidly, the people of Pingyao still retain their traditional way of life. Mr. Wang Liang's home at 31 Dongxiaoqiang Lane is such an example. Wang showed me more than a dozen blue porcelain cricket jars, each holding a huge cricket. The family was busy making preparations for his son's wedding. At 26 Xixiaoxiang Lane lives Wang Xiuqing, an old granny approaching her 80s. The family of her husband used to run a clock and watch shop and, as a result, she has a collection of antique clocks. The murals around her heated brick bed are from the late Qing Dynasty and depict street scenes of the time. The master of the quadrangle at 98 Shaxiang Lane is Wang Liansan. The 82-year-old man has a great collection of Ming and Qing furniture, which the family uses in daily life.

The big courtyard at 34 Shangximen Street South has a high gate tower flanked by two huge stone lions. It is the

only mansion in Pingyao that is still occupied by its original owner. The family, surnamed Fan, has four generations living under the same roof. Yin Xiuzhen, the eldest member of the family, is in her 90s.

The oldest leasing shop in Pingyao was Fengshengchang at 32 Shuyuan Street. Established during the Qianlong reign in the Qing Dynasty, the shop has gone on for 11 generations. The current owner is 77-year-old Qiao Chunyue. It once enjoyed great fame for selecting sedan-chair bearers for Emperor Guangxu. Now, the shop still does good business in wedding and funeral services.

Translated by Li Zhenguo



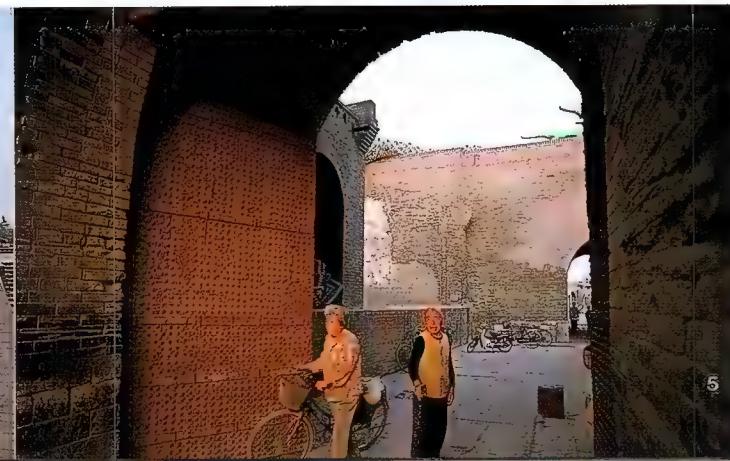
Traditional Folks



Tips for the Traveller

- Transport:** Trains: No. 605 from Beijing to Pingyao; No. 536 from Xi'an to Pingyao; and No. 785 from Taiyuan to Pingyao. Bus: Direct expressway service from Taiyuan to Pingyao. In the city: Hire a tricycle or a genuine antique Ming-Qing horse-pulled cart. On top of the city walls: Tricycles: 25 yuan per trip around the city. Bicycle: 5 yuan each. Helicopter service outside the north gate: 40 yuan per person.
- Accommodation:** Pingyao Hotel: Standard room, 100 yuan; and Minfeng Hotel: Standard room, 100 yuan.
- Local Delicacies:** Pingyao Beef; yellow wine, Pingyao pastry; "wantuoze" and wheaten food.
- Shopping:** The one unique shopping area is the Ming-Qing Antique Street, selling polished lacquer wares, antiques and Ming and Qing furniture.
- Places to Visit:** The Rishengchang Money Exchange Shop, furniture exhibition of the owners of the Baichuantong, Pingyao Lacquer Art Exhibition, and Qingxu Taoist Temple.

- 1. In the morning, people do physical exercises at the foot of the city wall.**
- 2. Residents of Fanjia Street watching a World Cup game on TV**
- 3. The characteristic Minfeng Hotel**
- 4. Travelling on top of the city walls on a tricycle**
- 5. Planks wrapped with iron sheets form the east city gate.**
- 6. Shanxi opera fans gather at the home of Zhao Yongchun.**



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The Crystal Palace Hotel
天津 Tianjin



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厦门 Xiamen



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昆明 Kunming



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重庆 Chongqing



杭州友好饭店
Friendship Hotel
杭州 Hangzhou



竹辉饭店
Bamboo Grove Hotel
苏州 Suzhou



中山国际酒店
Zhongsha International Hotel
中山 Zhongshan



南中国大酒店
South China Hotel
三亚 Sanya



东港大酒店
East Seaport Hotel
宁波 Ningbo



武汉亚洲大酒店
Wuhan Asia Hotel
武汉 Wuhan



康乐园大酒店
KangLe Garden Resort
兴隆 XingLong



环岛泰得大酒店
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海口 Haikou



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常州 Changzhou



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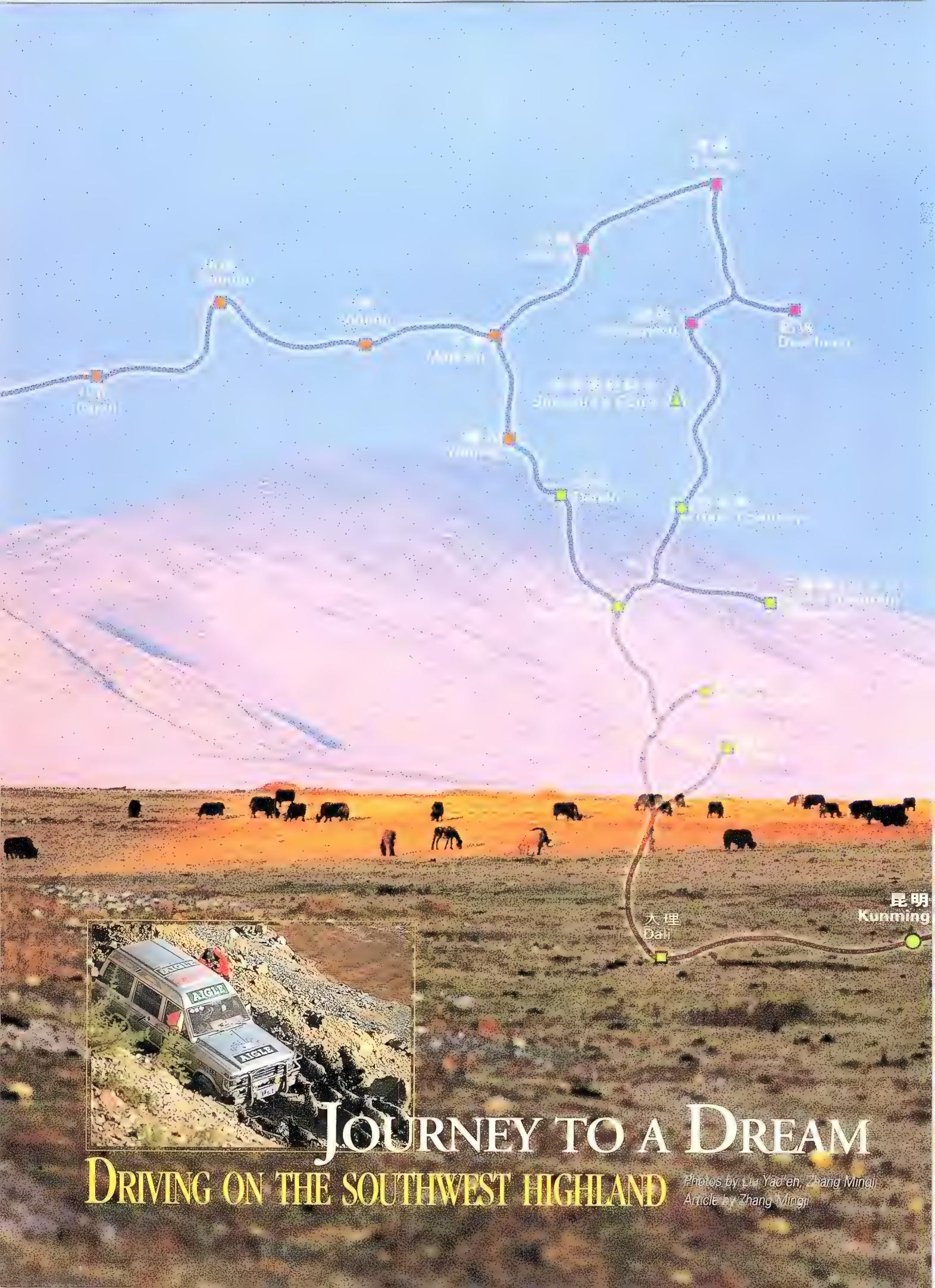
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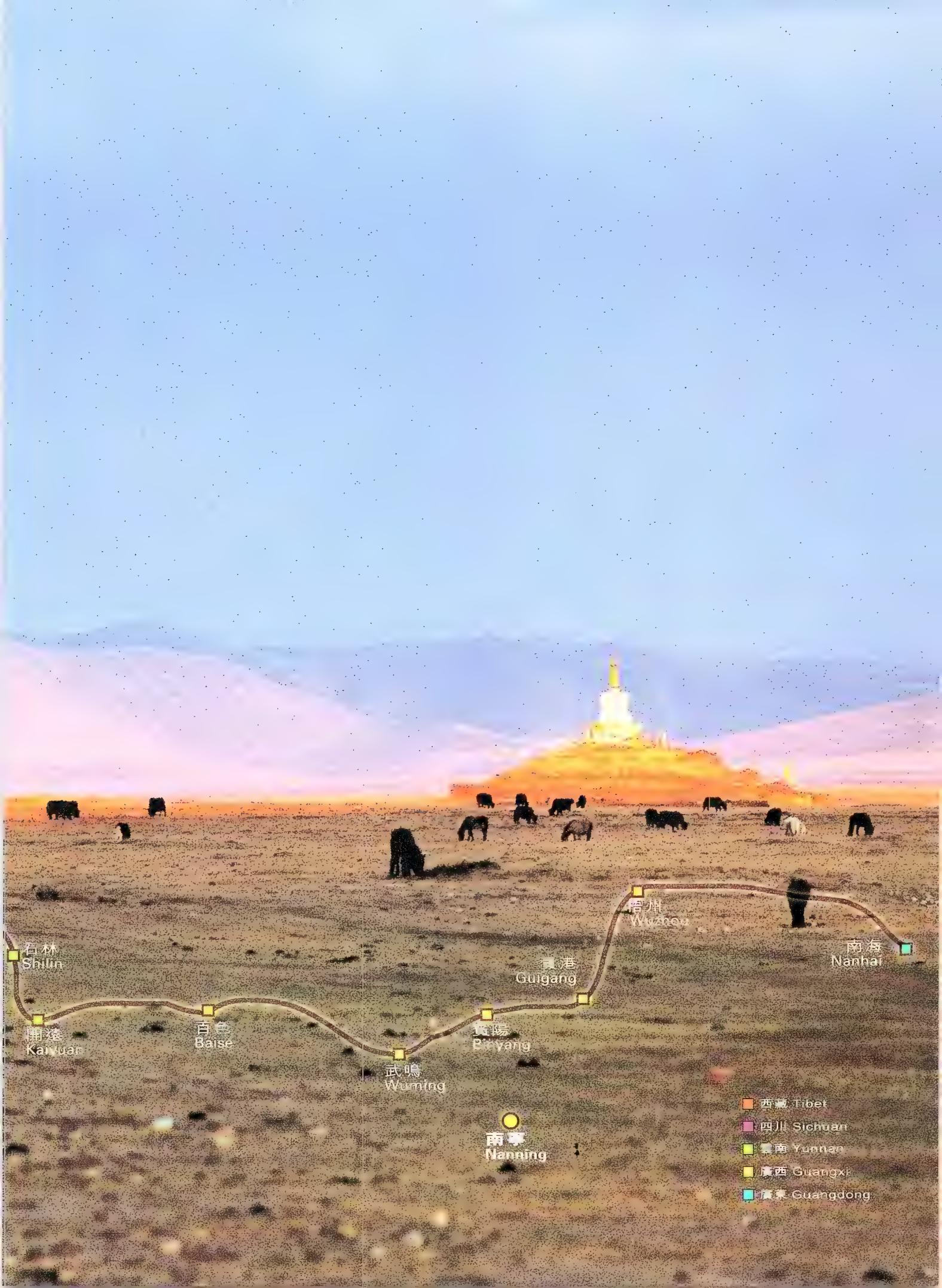
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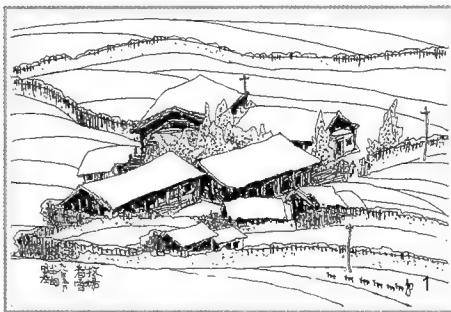


JOURNEY TO A DREAM

DRIVING ON THE SOUTHWEST HIGHLAND

Photos by Liu Yao'en, Zhang Minji
Article by Zhang Minji





The beauty along the 110-kilometre mountain road was stunning: Azaleas burning like fire on the mountain slopes, and Naxi village houses demonstrating the primitive Dongba culture.

TASTING HONEY AND ENJOYING THE SUNSET We started from Nanhui City in Guangdong Province, and arrived at Huaxian County in western Yunnan at 8:00 p.m. three days later. The highway was extremely busy and very dusty. The villagers along the way were drying their wheat stalks in the middle of the road, ignoring the car horns, and the shouting and cursing drivers. Entertainment halls lined the roadsides, and it appeared that the local people enjoyed their lives after a hard day's work.

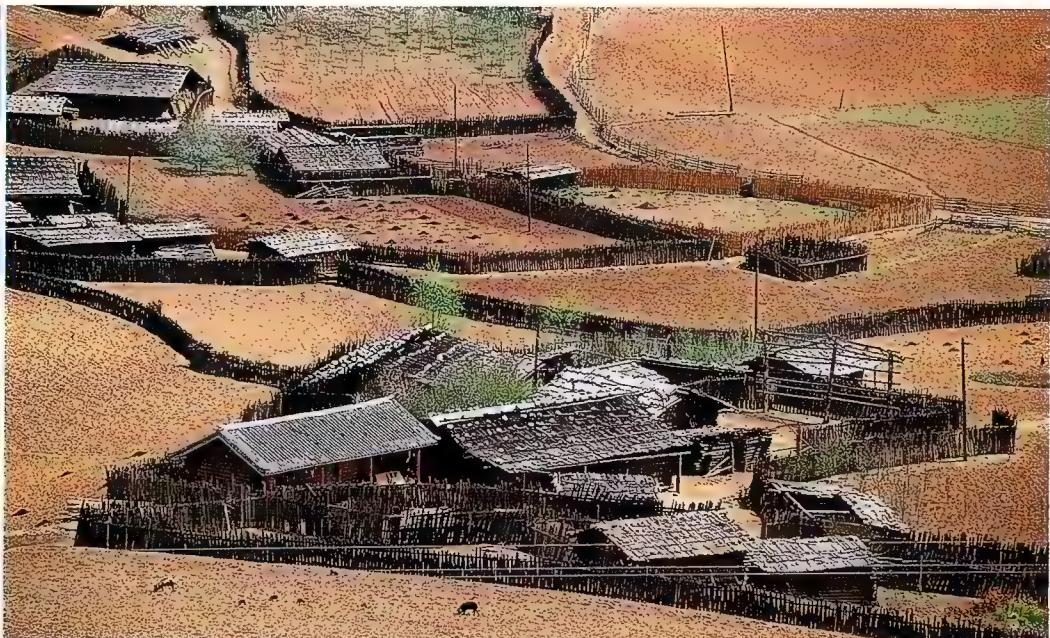
We arrived at Dali at noon on April 26. The blue sky was reflected in the vast Erhai Lake, and the snow made the mountains look bitterly cold. The Bai people's houses were scattered around the lake. We decided to pass on the local attractions, the three exquisite pagodas at Dali and the Butterfly Spring, and hurried on to Lijiang before dark. At the height of the mountain pass, we chatted with a local bee farmer while enjoying the rape-flower honey he offered and waiting for the sunset. Coated in gold, the Yulong Mountain really resembled a jade dragon, as its name suggests. Lying across the land, the distant Haba Snow Mountain appeared crystal white. Perhaps this was a prelude to the beauty of the Shangri-La dream I was seeking here in this plateau.

A PARADISE FOR THE NAXI At five in the morning the next day, we drove to the mountain pass to take photos of the sunrise over the Jade Dragon Mountain, before visiting the Square Street in the ancient city Dayan. The street, paved with coloured stones, cleanly swept and lined with drooping willows, was surrounded by clear streams and canals; the beautiful wooden houses of the Naxi people were built on the banks of the rivers spanned with elegant bridges. Birds were chattering in cages at door steps, while women were doing their laundries at the riverside. We watched, enthralled by the simple and traditional way of living of the Naxi people; they seemed to enjoy a leisurely and carefree life in their own paradise.

We then came to Hutiaoxia, or the Tiger Jumping Gorge. The Jinsha River became very narrow here, causing the unusually dangerous torrent. Though water levels were low in this season and the river was not surging wildly, the swift waters still made a very spectacular scene. Strangely, the stone tiger sitting beside

Previous page: The sunset glow shines over the Buddhist pagoda nestled at the foot of the Hengduan Mountains. (by Liu Yao'en)
Previous page, insert: Blocked by a flock of sheep at Baxoi (by Liu Yao'en)

1. New snow on the farm (painting by Zhang Mingji, at Zhongdian, Yunnan) ♦ 2. The sunning shed commonly seen on Zhongdian Plateau (by Liu Yao'en) ♦ 3. Houses of Naxi people (by Liu Yao'en) ♦ 4. A canyon viewed from steep mountain cliffs (by Zhang Mingji)







Four seasons in one day was perfectly normal here. Fortunately we had brought enough clothes and were prepared for all seasons.

the river did not look like one that could jump over the river.

SEARCH FURTHER NORTH FOR THE SHANGRI-LA At 4:00 p.m. we arrived at Zhongdian. Spring had not yet come here; the farm vegetation was still withered, and the woods, still barren, were shivering in the cold wind. A few tall buildings were freshly built beside the new trans-state highway. On the vast grassland west of town, an airport was under construction, and the roaring machinery won the competition with the Guihua Temple bells.

Guizhou Temple, originally called Gedan Songtangzampo Monastery, was the centre of Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism in Sichuan and Yunnan. We wandered around the temple for about two hours and then returned to the town to rest. Two lamas passed by on a motorbike, and their red robes fluttered in the wind, like a flag, a Buddhist banner, or a flying dream!

We decided to go to Baishuitai (White Water Terrace) the following day, thinking that the real Shangri-La must be there. Baishuitai was the largest spring terrace in China. Though interesting, Baishuitai was not what we were looking for and we knew we must continue further north. However, the scenes along the 110-kilometre road there were especially wonderful. In the woods and on the mountain slopes, the azalea flowers bloomed like burning fire. Primitive pictographic characters of Dongba culture were carved on the doors of the Naxi village houses. The houses of the Yi people were mainly built on mountain slopes and looked very much like defence works on an ancient battlefield.

FOUR SEASONS IN A DAY In the morning of April 29, our jeep roared for three hours to enter the Benzilan area where three rivers joined. The Hengduan Mountains seemed to impose its cold and steep body down onto us. At the bottom of the valley, willows were swaying in warm breeze, the sky was deep blue and the clouds were pure white. Half way up the mountain, the wind subsided and the sunshine strengthened. The woods and grass were flourishing. We felt the heat and humidity of summer and took off our wind-breakers, and put on sun visors. As our jeep neared the top,



the weather changed to autumn. The leaves became crimson, and the grass was turning yellow. I put my wind-breaker back on. The mountain pass was a world of snow and ice. The change in "seasons" was so dramatic — one moment strong sunshine, the next I needed to put on my down coat and mountaineering shoes!

I learned later that it is a very common experience to have four seasons in a day in this area and that it is easy to fall ill here. Fortunately we were properly prepared to combat the weather.

THE WONDERFUL SONGS COMPENSATED FOR THE FOOD We lodged at Dêqên county town. I tried to compare the scenes of our day with that of Shangri-La described by James Hilton in his novel, *Lost Horizon*. They were quite similar, but I realised that beautiful Shangri-La was not real, but an image of paradise to be kept only in our hearts!

The hostess of the hotel, a typical Tibetan woman, sang wonderfully, but cooking was not her greatest strength. Listening carefully, I recognised it was *Xiangbala*, a tune often sung by Jia Yang Ji: "There is a beautiful place, no pain, no sadness. Xiangbala, my beautiful homeland, the place where immortals live."

Was "Xiangbala" Shangri-La? Doubt rose in my mind and I insisted we look for the mysterious Shangri-La on our return route.

AN EMBARRASSMENT We wandered in Dêqên for a whole day on April 30, but failed to catch a glimpse of the real beauty of Meili Snow Mountain cast in clouds. Instead we visited a roadside village.

We then entered the Flying Temple (Feilaisi) after having made a donation. The only old lama there was chanting Buddhist scriptures and now and then he blew on his long trumpet, producing a deep, low



1. A native of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (painting by Zhang Mingji)
2. Yanjing in Tibet (by Chen Wenbiao) ♦ 3. Drying salt (by Liu Yao'en)
4. Crossing the Snow Mountain Pass (by Liu Yao'en)





In a park, beautifully-dressed Tibetans were celebrating the Tibetan festival "World Incense Day". Tents and coloured sun umbrellas dotted the lawn and the air was filled with the aroma of buttered tea. A popular Hong Kong tune "At the Centre of the Water" was played while boys and girls were disco dancing.

town, Baxoi.

We climbed up the Yela Mountain Pass and had a panoramic view of the scenery. The snow-capped peaks of the Boshuladian Mountain range rose one after another in a magnificent pattern. A thin highway appeared in the valley winding towards Nujiang River. About six kilometres from Baxoi, the jeep sputtered wildly and became paralysed by the roadside. A bolt on the rear bridge was lost and all the oil was gone. We could not continue any more. So I volunteered to go

back along the highway to find the lost bolt. I prayed, and thankfully, I found it in a heap of stones about six kilometres back.

In Baxoi, Master Xiao, an experienced technician from Hubei

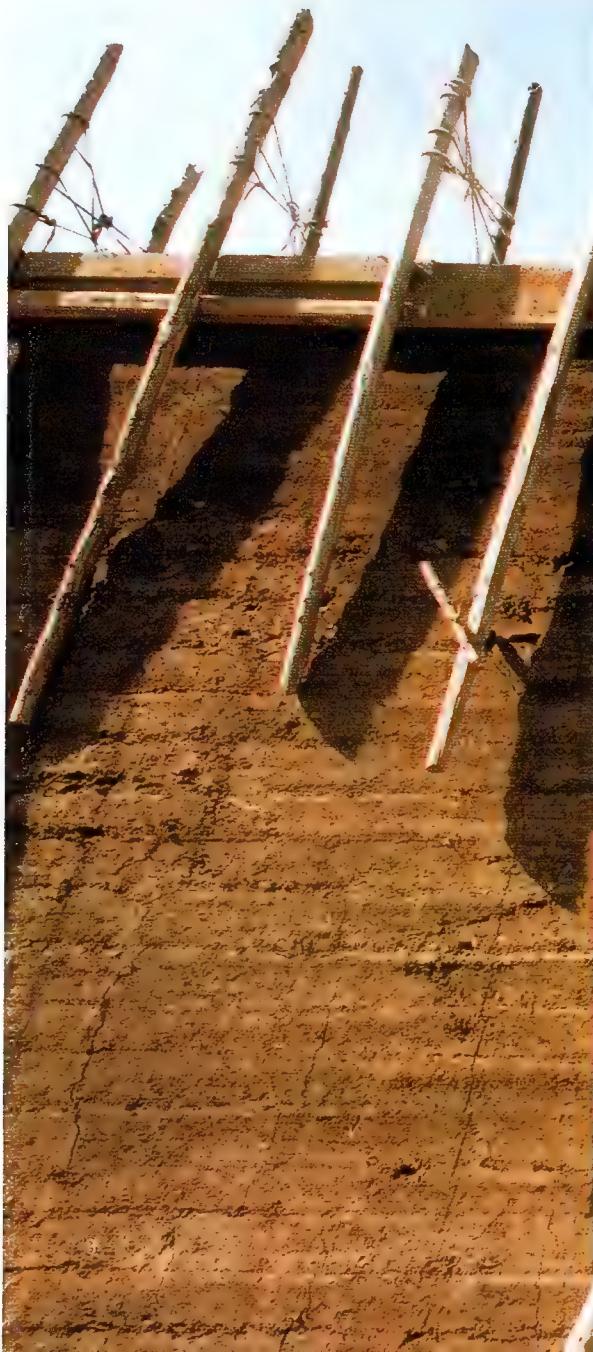
sound. We then went to the Viewing Terrace on the Meili Snow Mountain. The mountain slope was covered with Buddhist banners, and a few Tibetan women were burning mugwort and turning Buddhist wheels. After they finished their turning, they stretched out their hands. Automatically I handed over some money, but they shook their heads, muttering a few words. This was in fact a blessing gesture; I felt terribly embarrassed.

CROSSING THREE MOUNTAINS IN A DAY We arrived at Yanjing (Salt Well) at two in the afternoon. After a quick lunch we drove to Lancang River where salt was produced on the banks. We decided then to go to Markam and met a snow storm at Hongla Mountain Pass. A few herdsmen were repairing their fences in the snow storm.

May 1 was a day full of challenge. We planned to cross three mountains in a day. The Lawu Mountain Pass was not exceptionally high, only 4,500 metres above sea level, but the snow storm of the previous day made it appear taller and colder. From snowy slopes, hares and marmots gazed at us without fear. Mount Jiaoba had no snow at all. With the scorching sun over head, it was extremely hot and dry to drive on its winding road. Looking back, the highway wound through the mountains like thin ribbons. After going up and down for seven hours, we finally arrived at the 5,008-metre-high Dongda Mountain Pass.

A bolt in the gear box was damaged and the exhaust pipe was broken too. The jeep roared like a bomber all the way to Bamda.

PICKING UP THE LOST BOLT We tried all the ways to fix the gear box, but had no way to repair the exhaust pipe. We had to drive the roaring broken jeep to the nearest county



1. The barren Mount Haizi (painting by Zhang Mingji, at Batang, Sichuan)
2. A household workshop (by Zhang Mingji)
3. Tibetans building a new house (by Zhang Mingji)
4. Snow on Jiaola Mountain in May (by Liu Yao'en)

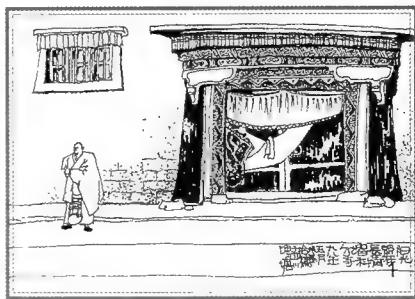


Province, fixed the car. The "bomber" had become a "cat" again and we continued our journey westwards to search for our dreamland.

Baxoi means "village at the foot of a heroic mountain" in Tibetan. It happened to be the Tibetan festival, World Incense Day. The local Tibetans, all in colourful clothes, set up tents or colourful umbrellas on the grass. Some were listening to a Hong Kong song, *At the Centre of the Water*, while preparing buttered tea. The sun was shining brightly, and boys and girls were disco dancing. It was like a landscape painting scrolling a joyous occasion!

A BITTERLY COLD NIGHT IN THE JEEP We were told by many people that the southern route from Sichuan to Tibet





Tourists are allowed to visit every hall of the temple, and, if they like, they can stay in its guest rooms. We played games with the monks there and got along well with them.

was a very difficult one, so we decided to return to Bamda first and then enter western Sichuan.

At 5:00 a.m. on May 4, we stayed at the icy Yela Mountain Pass, anticipating the sunrise. A section of broken wall from the ruins of an ancient village helped me combat the chilling cold. I felt like a native, without any altitude sickness at all, and so I climbed up and down, taking many photos. With satisfaction, we headed towards Markam.

When we were going to cross the Lawu Mountain, the jeep ran out of gas. With the help of a young Tibetan couple, we got 10 litres of gas, enough to get to Markam. It was my fourth night to stay overnight in the jeep to take care of our luggage and equipment. I was nearly frozen in the small hours of the morning. A hailstorm then started, striking the top of the jeep noisily, not allowing me any further sleep.

A REFRESHING HOT SPRING BATH In the early morning of May 5, our jeep left Markam and began to climb mountains. Soon we entered a big canyon, where imposing mountains faced each other, short green tea trees with light yellow flowers grew out of cliffs, small streams murmured with their supply of snow water, and clusters of bushes produced an attractive mix of yellow and green.

After crossing Jinsha River Bridge, the highway extended to the north along the river. Everywhere we went, we saw Buddhist pagodas, scripture banners, and people turning the wheels and chanting scriptures.

As we were close to Mount Haizi, I decided to try a hot spring bath. According to our information, there were hot



springs in the roadside streams and also at the No. 305K Road Maintenance Team Station. We saw a group of Tibetans bathing in the stream, men close to the mountain and women further downstream, all naked. We came to the Road Maintenance Team Station, and the workers welcomed us to use their bathing hall. After the bath, I felt refreshed.

THE JEEP BROKE DOWN AGAIN We got to Litang, the highest city in the world, at 9:00 p.m. and went to visit Changqingchun Ke'er Temple the next morning. The temple sits on a mountain slope in the northern suburbs of the city, comparable in size to the Jokhong Monastery in Lhasa. Here there seemed to be no restrictions. We could visit any of the halls and rooms, and the living Buddha even played games with us. Visitors could also lodge in the guest rooms of the monastery.

After lunch, we went south to Daocheng. The landscape after a big earthquake was unimaginable. There was no inhabitants over a 50-square-kilometre area, and grass only grew sparsely, but there were birds chattering and singing happily. The scenery of Daocheng is most beautiful in October. But for me, it was already beautiful enough in this season. The poplars were sprouting; the village was in the glow of the sunset; people were working on the slopes; and women were washing at the stream. However, before we had had enough of this picturesque scenery, the engine casing of our jeep broke and the oil leaked out again. We had to return to Zhongdian in Yunnan.

TRAVELLING THROUGH SHANGRI-LA UNKNOWINGLY After passing through the Greater Snow Mountain Pass, we drove on a winding road leading to a big canyon. When we were still half way up the mountain, a colourful world of wonder suddenly appeared before our eyes: wild peach flowers, azalea and many other unknown varieties of flowers were popping out of forests; on the snow-covered stream banks, autumn leaves like burning fires were fringed by green woods; terraced fields and vegetable gardens lay beside wooden Tibetan houses, from which cooking smoke curled up; and flocks of cattle and sheep wound their way up a mountain path. Suddenly dark clouds gathered in the sky. The distant mountain villages became dark blue, and the snow-capped peaks turned a grey-blue colour. Jagged mountain peaks resembled a paper-cut silhouette pasted on the backdrop. Tranquil, peaceful and beautiful, it was perhaps a piece of pastoral poetry.

After we left the big canyon and crossed the Lesser Snow Mountain Pass, the enchanting scene disappeared. At supper in Geza Township, the hostess of the restaurant asked me: "Are you back from Shangri-La?"

"Shangri-La, where is it?" I was puzzled.

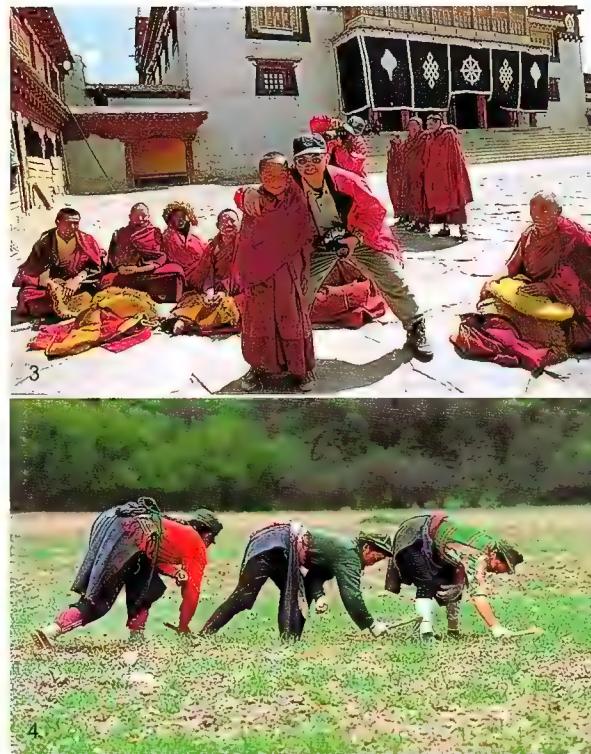
"It's in the big canyon 50 kilometres north from here."

Incredibly, we had been in Shangri-La without even knowing it! No wonder it had been so beautiful, mysterious and attractive. We wanted to go back immediately, but we had to give up the idea due to our damaged jeep.

It felt better to let Shangri-La remain more like a mystery in our hearts. And yet we had already realised our dream!



Translated by Ming Qiang



1. Changqingchun Ke'er Monastery (painting by Zhang Mingji, at Litang, Sichuan)
2. The blooming azalea trees are as tall as a two-storey building. (by Zhang Mingji)
3. Monks at the Changqingchun Ke'er Monastery (by Liu Yao'en)
4. Young women working in the fields of Shangri-La (by Liu Yao'en)





1

Photos & article by Wang Dongyou

The Fish-Catching Festival of the Miao



2

The 15th day of the third lunar month is the Fish-Catching Festival of the Miao people living in Southwest China's Guizhou Province. The celebration held in Gaozhai Village in Kaiyang County is the most grand.

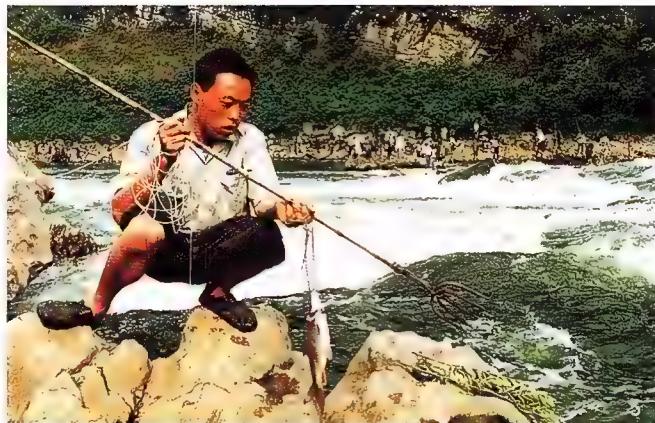
On the eve of the festival the villagers go up the mountains to gather plants such as chinaberry and fragrant leaves and pound them into smithereens, which is locally referred to as "fish medication". All those who want to take part in the festival must prepare this special medicine for the fish, otherwise, according to the regulations of the Miao, they are not allowed to take part in the fish-catching activity.

Early in the morning on the festival day, people of the whole village, men and women, old and young, flock to gather at the village entrance. Women are dressed in their holiday best, while men carry their fish forks, nets and the medication they have prepared for the fish. In a long line, they start off to walk along a winding mountain path toward the river. The fishing place is at the confluence of the Nanming River and the Qingshui River bordering the four counties of Kaiyang, Fuquan, Gui'an and Longli, about 90 kilometres from Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou Province.

Thousands of villagers from the four counties, fish forks in hand, stand on the river banks, waiting until those going to the upper reaches have their job done — to spread the fish medicine into the river. The medication will anaesthetize the fish but not poison them. After mid-day, the festival master gives the order, and in an instant the fish medicine is poured into the river.

After the medication takes effect, the fish struggle to swim to the surface of the river, leaping out of the water. Just at this moment thousands of forks dart like shooting arrows, aiming at the leaping fish. The Miao people have two kinds of fish forks: four-prong and six-prong ones, each prong having a hook on it. No fish can escape if they are caught by any of the forks. The fork is fixed on a bamboo stick about one metre long; at the end of the stick is a long thin rope. When a target is spotted, you throw the fork at it and then draw the rope. Waves of cheers rise from the banks to celebrate the catches. Sometimes, when a man hits a big fish, all the others would immediately rush over to help him. In the battle of fish catching, women work as hard as men — they use small nets to catch fish close to the shore.

When the Miao people catch fish, they do not mind how much they can get. Instead, they lay a greater emphasis on friendship. If two people's forks fall on the same fish, they would cut the fish into two



halves and share them willingly. As for how the Fish-Catching Festival was initiated, no one can give an explicit answer. The local people only know that it is related to a legend. Long, long ago, there was a serious drought and the land became cracked. Believing that the fish had drunk up the water in the river, the king of the Miao ordered his people to gather Fragrant Leaves from the mountains and put them into the river. They used the slaughtered fish as sacrifice to Heaven and the Dragon King, asking for favourable weather and abundant harvest.

With the passing of time, the content of the festival changed. Today, the festival has become a good opportunity for people to have social contacts, especially for young men and women to meet.

As dusk descends, the seething river valley gradually quietens down, and people begin to have their picnic on the river banks. Women dish up glutinous rice, cured meat and sausage and pour out wine for their men, while young girls carry a basket of glutinous rice balls to the young men they like. If a young man accepts a young girl's glutinous rice ball, it means he takes a fancy to the girl. If a girl's glutinous rice balls are all eaten up, she would feel proud of herself and her parents would feel happy too. Sitting together on the riverbanks, people talk and laugh while enjoying the fish soup and drinking mellow wine. It is a lively scene. Meanwhile, at the top of high cliffs, young girls and young men would commence antiphonal singing:

*"I come from a thousand miles away to look for you,
But don't know where you live.*

*"Red carps of the big river like to enter the net,
I want to cast my net but the fish is nowhere to get."*

*"I am a fish in the shallow water,
You throw your hook in a deep whirlpool.
I want to come upon your hook,
But fear I am not the one you like to pick."*

It is not until the evening that people begin to disperse. Now, the mountain path is filled with men and women on their way home. But at the moment the young men and women who have found their lovers would hide themselves in dense groves or a quiet corner on the mountain slope...

1. People gather on the river banks to celebrate the Fish-Catching Festival.
2. Women catch smaller fish with nets.
3. Enjoying a picnic by the river.
4. Young people sing antiphonal songs after sunset.
5. A thin rope draws in the catch.

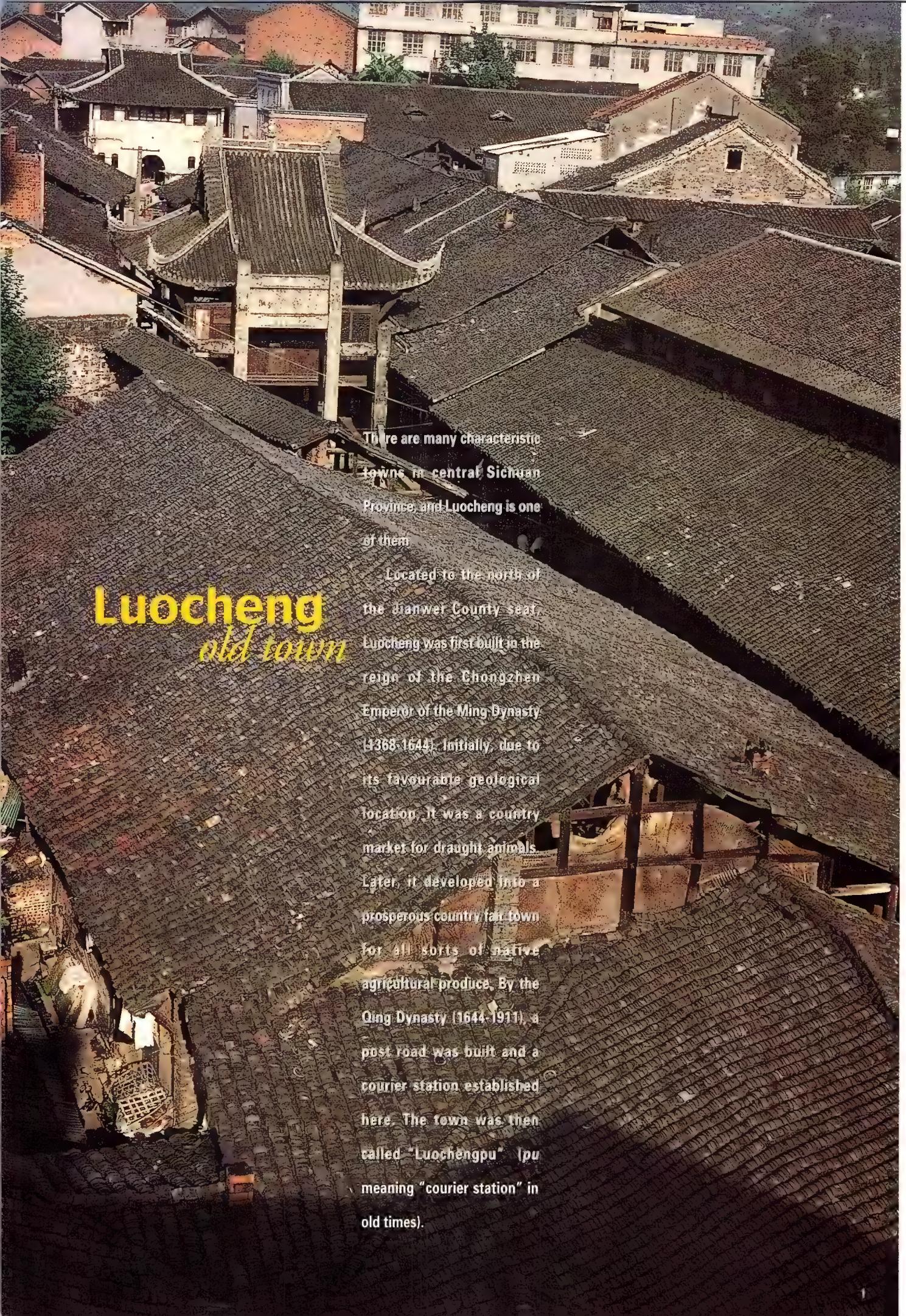


The boat-shaped street becomes lively early in the market day. (by Lai Wu)

Luocheng: a Town Shaped Like a Boat

Photos by Huang Yanhong, Lai Wu Article by Lai Wu





There are many characteristic towns in central Sichuan Province, and Luocheng is one of them.

Located to the north of the Jianwei County seat, Luocheng was first built in the reign of the Chongzhen Emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Initially, due to its favourable geological location, it was a country market for draught animals. Later, it developed into a prosperous country fair town for all sorts of native agricultural produce. By the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), a post road was built and a courier station established here. The town was then called "Luochengpu" (pu meaning "courier station" in old times).

Luocheng old town

The far-reaching fame of Luocheng has derived from its boat-shaped main street, which earned the town the nickname "A Boat Atop a Mountain". Entering the town from Xiajie Street in the south and walking towards the northwest, one would see the street is so narrow that the wide eaves of houses on both sides of the street almost touch each other. As one continues to walk, the street gradually widens up and becomes about 20 metres wide at the central section. In the middle stands a theatre, and with spacious ground around it, no eaves stretch out to reach it. After passing the archway behind the theatre, you will see that the street narrows again to form the sharp point of the bow. At the stern is the Lingguan Temple. Formerly, there was a tower standing astride the street linking up the houses on both sides of the street. Unfortunately, it was long ago pulled down. Fancifully, the local people took the ancient theatre as the cabin of the "boat", the stone pole as the mast and the tower standing astride the street as the helm.

A Street That Evokes Emotion

Walking along the boat-shaped street, one's attention would be caught naturally by the house eaves. At dusk, the rays of the setting sun slanting through the narrow crevices left between the eaves stimulate intense emotions and even feelings of emptiness.

Viewing the architecture from a higher vantage point, one can see the eaves on both sides of the streets almost touch each other, giving the impression that something mysterious has been covered up intentionally. Luocheng has evolved into an attraction to film and television makers as well as to people of other countries.

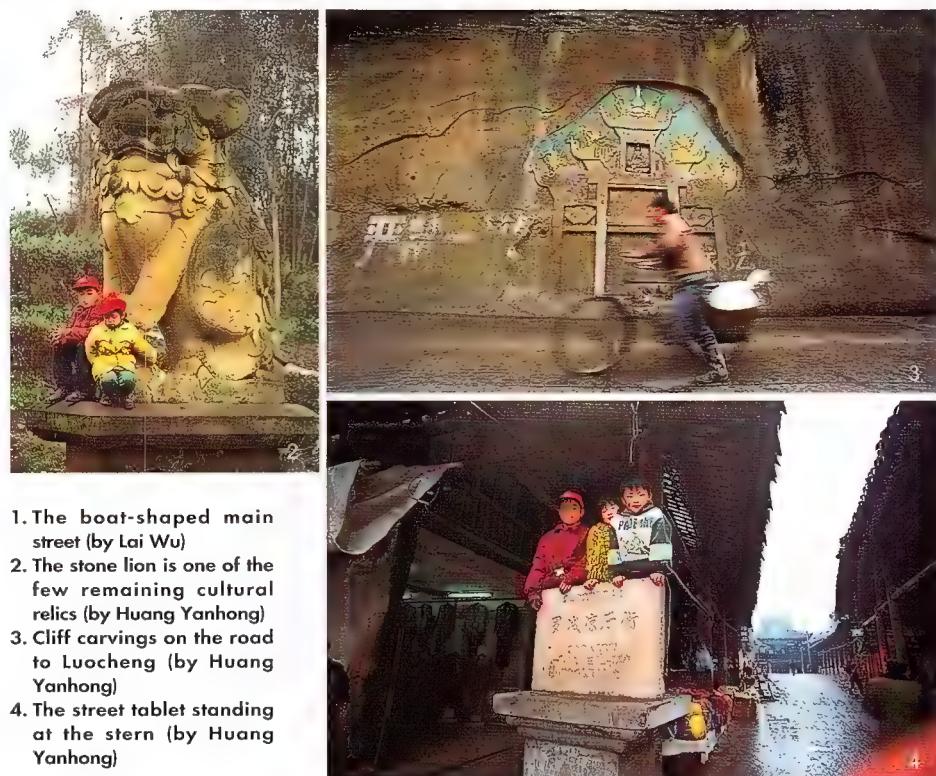
Another interesting feature is the two-metre-wide trellis under the eaves. These trellises, all wooden structures, form a 200-meter-long corridor; their columns are orderly arranged and fixed by wedges. Looking up at the narrow slit of sky through the crevices between the trellises, the area below appears to be a gloomy world propped up by wood columns. The rays of the sun filter through exceptionally sharp and bright. It seems the sentiment of the old town is wrapped up, infiltrating into the outside world only through narrow crevices.

The street is uniquely quiet. The main sight is only the resolute columns propping up the trellises. Walking along the street one will

find one's mind becomes extremely peaceful and orderly, regardless of past experiences. No matter how the outside world changes, the people in this town will continue on with their lives, just as the columns will continue to support the trellises, with a profound sense of calm.

Old Stories of Doors and Locks

On my trip, I heard a lot of stories from the old folks in the town. One is called "Four Gates and Nine Caves", referring to the four gates and nine small lanes through which people came and went in Luocheng. In the old days, there were indeed doors and locks for all these gates and lanes. Special guards were assigned to sound the



1. The boat-shaped main street (by Lai Wu)
2. The stone lion is one of the few remaining cultural relics (by Huang Yanhong)
3. Cliff carvings on the road to Luocheng (by Huang Yanhong)
4. The street tablet standing at the stern (by Huang Yanhong)

night watches. At the sound of the second watch, the doors of the gates and lanes would be locked. They would only be opened at the fifth watch early next morning. The local chronicles of Jianwei County recorded the names of the four gates, namely, Changgeng, Zhonghe, Qiming and Taihe. This sort of precision is rare for small places like Luocheng, and is evidence of the effort local people put forth to guard their town. It is a pity that over time all these gates were pulled down.

'Shuibazi' — Another Legendary Custom

Another story told by the old folks is about "Shuibazi" (water trough). The story is as follows: in the old days an unwritten rule in Luocheng stated that animals, such as pigs, dogs, ox, horses, goats and sheep as well as chickens, were not allowed to enter the town, nor

Luocheng old town



were any people wearing shoes. So, outside each town gate a *shuibazi* was put in place for people to wash their feet before entering. This perhaps may stem from the habits of the local Muslims. There were more than 200 Muslims in Luocheng, forming one of the major Muslim communities in Jianwei County.

In addition, there is also the local custom which is called "Screening the Sky to Cross the Sea". It is, in fact, an annual ceremony to pray for rain. When the ceremony is held, people place a large piece of white cloth over the eaves to cover up the boat-shaped street, so people down below are not able to see the sky. Usually, the ceremony is held at the Linguan Temple. On this occasion, the folks would sacrifice dozens of animals to the deities, which are placed in a line stretching from the temple to the theatre. In the next few days, to show their piety the folks would neither kill any animal nor eat any meat.

No Records About the Origin

The local customs can only be described superficially. Even the local elders say, "It is difficult to give a clear explanation of all the peculiar phenomena in Luocheng." Perhaps the veteran folks are reluctant to reveal their local secrets to outsiders. Or, more likely, the reasons for these Luocheng customs have been obscured by time.

For instance, no local people can say for sure why Luocheng was built in the shape of a boat. Some just infer that their ancestors did not build the town in the shape of a boat intentionally; they just built it to suit the terrain; and that later someone, by chance, looked at the town

from a higher vantage point and found it resembled a boat.

People from the cities, however, may often view a mysterious phenomenon with the perspective of the educated, who always like to find the reasons behind such unusual events and formulate a concept for things deemed as natural. Would their seemingly reasonable or imaginable explanations be accepted by the locals? It is hard to say. In the end, it matters little since the people in the town will go on living their lives as they have done for centuries anyway.

A Port Away from the River

Although the largest salt and coal distribution centre in the area, Luocheng is not accessible by any river; the nearest river is a long distance away at Jinshan Town. One can possibly imagine that the people of Luocheng may have felt bitter about their location and so, built the town in the shape of a boat to express their fervent inner longing for water and river.

Without a river, and consequently a good supply of water, the earliest inhabitants there would surely have experienced innumerable hardships in their lives. Later, the Xindian Reservoir was built to tackle the problem of drinking water. Yet, the discharge from the nearby coal plants and town sewage have contaminated the water in the reservoir and the people of Luocheng have to go back to well and spring water. Some clever people realised that selling water could be a profitable business and now, early every morning one can hear the vendors on the streets selling water. Luocheng typifies the idiosyncrasies of the

modern world — visitors talk excitedly about the boat-shaped street, while the people of Luocheng know nothing of boats, nor do they have sufficient clean water to drink.

Lively Market Day

The ancient town turns very lively on market days. The trellises both in front and at the back of the theatre used to be very animated sites of business. Now, most of the stalls have moved to the rural produce market, and those left behind are mainly teahouses and stands selling clothing and food. There are also numerous booths selling cloth. On the counters of these booths are rolls of colourful cloth, and some vendors even drape their samples down from the eaves to attract potential buyers. Cloth sells well in Luocheng because the local people prefer to make their own clothes to save money, and they are talented in the art of tailoring. On the streets of Luocheng there is ample evidence of their accomplishments in the many fashionably dressed young people.

Tower in the Boat

In the front of the stage is a row of teahouses which are ideal places to rest, meet friends and pass the time. These are where local people often gather to chat about all sorts of daily topics — their health, their families, the harvest, the weather — a reflection of the simplicity of their lives and their indifference to outside affairs. In the shadows of the big trellises, the irritations generated by the summer heat vanish unknowingly in the unhurried environment of tea drinking.

The biggest teahouse,



1. In the dim night light, the small town assumes a quiet atmosphere. (by Huang Yanhong)
2. Lingguan Temple, where people used to pray for rain in the old days (by Huang Yanhong)
3. Bean sauce made in the local style (by Lai Wu)
4. Mending an old chinaware (by Lai Wu)



4

called Tower in the Boat, has a history of over 200 years. Besides tea, it also provides accommodation. Moreover, it also provides the best position to watch performance on the stage, if it were still in use; performances stopped a long time ago. Over the pillars on both sides of the stage is a couplet, which states: "Kun, Gao, Hu, Tan and Deng, the singing echoes in the beams; Sheng, Dan, Jing, Mo and Chou, the skill derives from the theatre." The first line of the couplet traces the origin of the Sichuan Opera, while the second line summarises all the roles in a theatrical performance. In a way, the couplet reveals the grand occasion of a stage performance in the past. Leisurely drinking tea and facing the empty stage, an ancient saying comes to my mind: "Life is a stage, and the stage is life."

C

Translated by Li Zhenguo

Tips for the Traveller:

Luocheng is about 230 kilometres from Chengdu. From the Xinnanmen (New South Gate) Bus Station in Chengdu, take a bus to Wutongqiao in Leshan, then change to a bus to Luocheng. There is lodging in the town, but the conditions are basic; prices match the quality (about 10 yuan a day).



Majie Melody Festival

Photos & article by Wang Tong



Majie Village in Central China's Henan Province is a tiny place rarely marked on a map. But to many, this small village means much more than its size and geographic location. Every year on the 13th day of the first lunar month, folk melody singers from throughout the country gather here to hold the Majie Melody Festival.

Melody singing is a traditional Chinese folk art which tells historical stories and legends through song. Each has its own tune, so there are dozens of melody singing forms in China. Among the more popular ones are Jinshu of Shandong, Zhuizi of Henan, Yugu of Hubei, and Qingyin of Sichuan. The performances staged at the Majie Melody Festival very often include various other forms of folklore such as dances.

The Majie Melody Festival originated from a temple fair held in the village during the period 1314-1320 in the Yuan Dynasty. It was a tradition of the local folks to gather and sing melodies during the first month of the Chinese New Year. As Majie Village is located at the pass between western mountains and the plain in eastern Henan, it was a thoroughfare for merchants, officials and scholars travelling east to west in China. These gatherings in Majie drew more and more passers-by, and this day eventually became a major gathering day for folk melody singers.

For the locals who seemed to be addicted to listening to melodies, this day is even more important than the Chinese New Year's Day. Besides offering free lodging to the guest

singers, they always saved their best dishes to treat the artists coming from afar. For many singers, Majie was their second hometown, a place where they could always expect a warm welcome.



1. A performance about to start
2. The youngest performer is only six years old.
3. A group of artists performing
4. Simply enjoying themselves
5. Singing — loudly!

The Longest Hair on Earth

Photos & article by Wu Jialin

In Yigu Township, Zhenxiong County in Wumeng Mountain, in the northeast of Yunnan Province, Song Zhaohua, an old lady who has lived there and been cut off from the outside world for years, is renowned for her incredibly long hair. On May 26, 1992, I measured her hair with the assistance of some local officers: it was 3.65 metres long, which was 0.6 metre longer than the record held by a young lady in the United States recorded in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

The old lady recalled her past: when she was in her prime, her hair was very thick and grew amazingly fast. She cut her hair the last time in 1961. Thereafter, in order to make things convenient when working, she put her hair up and wore a scarf. The "chignon" on her head got larger and larger and eventually, her own hair became a particular scarf in day-time, while at night, it became her pillow.

In 1985, a cadre of the township dropped into Song's place and was stunned by the size of her "head". The officer helped her undo her chignon and her hair measured 2.7 metres long. This means that her hair had gained 0.95 metre in length in seven years. Taking a closer look at her long hair, I found the tip of the hair was black, the middle section was grey and the root was white. It is hard for this granny to comb or wash her hair, but, strange enough, she has never had lice or fungal infections. Her hair looked very clean, no bad odours nor dandruff at all.

The old lady was born on the fourth of the second lunar month, 1904 in Wumeng Mountain. None of her ancestors had been to school and they earned a living by planting crops like corn, red beans and potatoes. She has never been to the county town 100 kilometres away from the village since there is no access between the two places, and has spent all her life in the impoverished mountainous area. In this adverse natural environment and under unfavourable weather conditions, she and her family can barely live on their limited harvests, and they always have to gather an abundant amount of wild plants for food. Fortunately, the mountain is home to a great variety of vegetation, of which many are very precious drugs used for Chinese medicine. Found nearby her house, there are *gastrodia* (*gastrodia elata*), *dangshen* (*codonopsis pilosula*), Chinese angelica, fleece-flower



root and many others. This granny has been living on these plants for many years; no wonder she possesses that tremendously long hair and enjoys longevity.

The husband of the old lady passed away in 1976. She has given birth to eight children, but only two boys and three girls are still living. At present, she has a total of 89 descendants including daughters- and sons-in-law, and she lives together with her youngest son, who is 54 years old, her grandchildren and her great grandchildren. Though she is nearly 100 hundred years old, she is in good health, has a good appetite, drinks two glasses of spirits every day and always shares some light housework. However, because of the changing weather, she feels dizzy easily and is annoyed at the pain in her bones.

Zhenxiong County is one of the poorest counties in Yunnan Province and Yigu Township is the most needy township in the county.

Though the old lady has numerous descendants to keep her company and receives a relief fund from the government, she still leads a poor and hard life. 



1. A young lady from Zhejiang Province with her 3.1-metre-long hair (Courtesy of Xinhua Daily)

2. A long-haired old man in Sichuan Province (by Yuan Dehong)

3. Song Zhaohua and her incredibly long hair



The Craft of Pottery

Photos & article by Chen Liehan

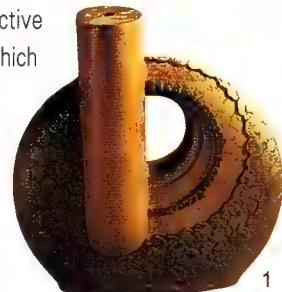
Pottery refers to the kind of earthen pots which are fired in a kiln at extremely high temperatures of around 1,000°C. With the clay base as the medium, together with the craftsmanship and creativity of the artist, the art piece reflects the artist's distinctive emotion and wisdom. So to speak, pottery is a craft which is so unique that it is much more than the product of a technique — it is also a formative art.

A pottery object is not only a material product, but also a spiritual one. In fact, every single piece of pottery work is a composition of material, design and decoration. When appreciating a piece of pottery, we should not only pay attention to these three aspects, but also to the art piece as a whole. Both the natural and formed beauty of the earthenware should be considered.

The beauty of pottery is demonstrated through its design, decoration and originality.

The hands are the main tools for shaping pottery. There are several ways of modelling a piece of pottery: moulding the base with bare hands; shaping the base on the revolving potter's wheel; rolling the soft clay into strips which are then coiled to form the artefact; casting, in which a plaster mould is made first and pottery is cast from the mould; and assembling the clay pieces which are prepared beforehand into a vessel. Since clay is a pliable substance, there are plenty of methods of shaping it, giving rise to the manifold designs of pottery.

The art forms of pottery creation can be demonstrated by three means. One approach is summarising, refining and imitating a real life object. Another type involves combining, interweaving, cutting or folding lines and figures



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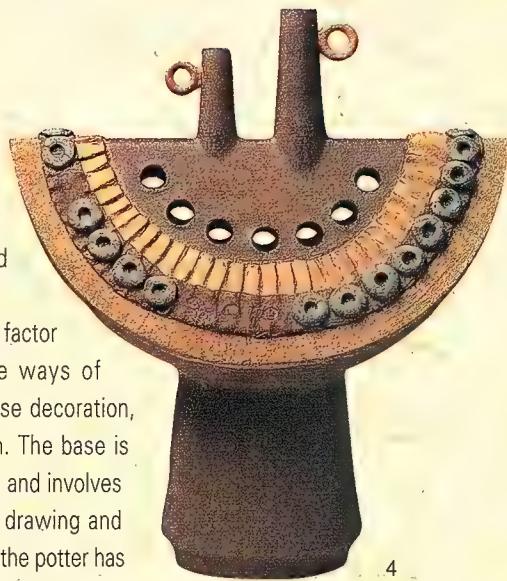
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1. Back to Nature
2. The Loess Plateau
3. Drops
4. Style
5. Autumn Rhythm



3

Translated by
Jess Tang

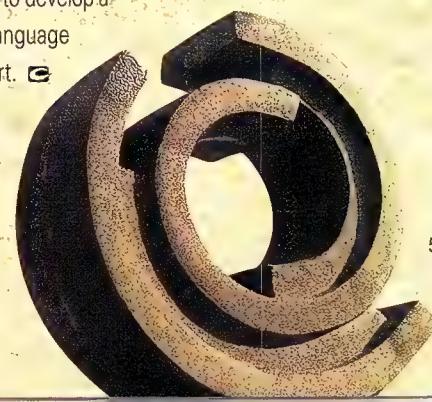


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to produce an article which is totally abstract. The third method is that a piece is created totally based on the potter's own original concept and aesthetic judgement.

Decorating a pottery article is a key factor of pottery creation. There are three ways of decorating a pottery object, namely base decoration, glaze decoration and colour decoration. The base is decorated before it is glazed and baked, and involves techniques such as kneading, carving, drawing and many others. In the process of kneading, the potter has to mould the soft clay by hand into different decorative parts and stick them onto the base. This kind of decoration preserves the softness of the clay and can display the raw and natural beauty of pottery. Carving implies the inscription of varied figures and patterns and layers on the base as decoration. Glaze decoration, the second method, refers to glazing over the base to make it shiny. The last method, colour decoration, involves the drawing of pictures on the base or on finished pottery.

When talking about the originality of the art of pottery, first of all, it should be understood that innovation is based on the basics of tradition. It is essential that potters should familiarise themselves with the inherent nature of clay so as to make this medium able to interpret their creative intentions. Pottery artists, however, should also bear in mind that they always have to absorb new ideas and broaden their horizons in order to inject new life into their creation. Last but not least, the artists have to break loose from their existing mode of thinking and restrictive ideas so as to develop a new language for the art. ☐

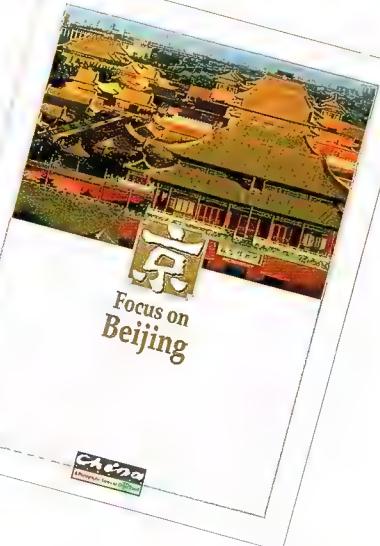


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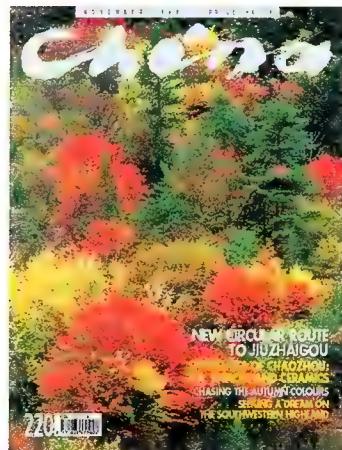
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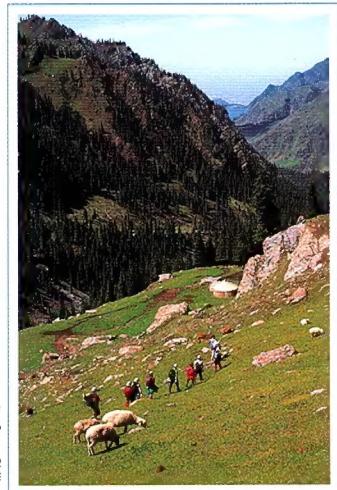


by Xie Guangui

Autumn is the season for savouring crabs. The fresh water **crabs from Yangcheng Lake** are no strangers to crab-lovers. Yet do you know how this delicious Yangcheng Crab is caught and kept? How do they remain alive and fresh after being transported great distances? Is it cheaper to taste the crabs in their "home lake"? No matter whether you are a gourmet or not, you should not miss this mouth-watering story!



by Wu Shan



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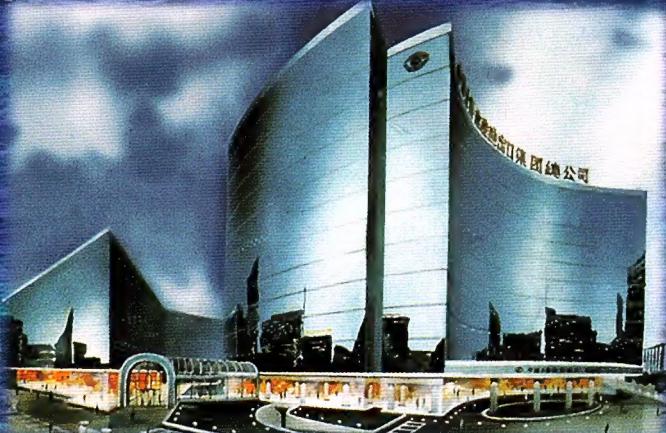
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